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THE LOVE AFFAIRS OF NAPOLEON

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE

Authorized Translation by VIOLETTE MONTAGU. With 17 Illustrations.

THE WIFE OF GENERAL BONAPARTE

Authorized Translation by VIOLETTE MONTAGU. With a Photogravure Frontispiece and 16 other Illustrations.

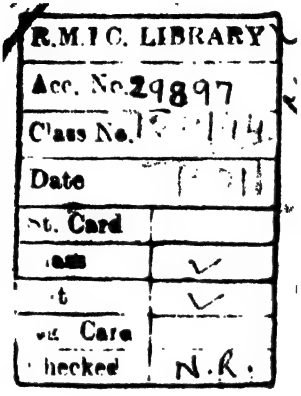


MADAME WALEWSKA
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THE LOVE AFFAIRS OF NAPOLEON

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF JOSEPH TURQUAN BY J. LEWIS MAY WITH NUMEROUS PORTRAITS

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THE LOVE AFFAIRS OF NAPOLEON

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CHAPTER I

Young Napoleon having left the École Militaire, displays his sub-lieutenant's uniform to the Parisians—The women of the Palais Royal—Youthful enthusiasm—Bonaparte at Valence—Madame du Colombier—Mademoiselle Caroline—Bonaparte and she eat cherries together on a fine summer morning—Madame Saint-Huberti—A legend—Bonaparte as a writer of verses—Bonaparte at Auxonne—A garrison adventure—Concerning love; a duologue—Bonaparte goes to Corsica as Lieutenant-Colonel of the National Guard—Corsican love affairs—Bonaparte's idyll with Mademoiselle Désirée Clary—He sees the women of Paris and gives up Désirée—Flirtation with Citoyenne Turreau.

YOUNG Napoleon de Buonaparte, *élève du roi*, had just quitted the École Militaire. He was sixteen years of age. In his pocket he bore his commission, in his heart a store of high ambitions, and no meagre stock of illusions in his head. Before proceeding to take up his position as second-lieutenant of bombardiers in the artillery regiment of La Fère, then garrisoned at Valence, he was beguiling the interval by sauntering leisurely about Paris.

In those days Paris was not the City of Marvels with

which we are familiar to-day; dirt, even more than magnificence, was her conspicuous characteristic; nevertheless, her reputation in Europe was immense, and none disputed her claim to the title of sovereign city of the world. Hitherto Napoleon had scarcely caught a glimpse of her splendours, but now he determined to drink in her beauties at his ease.

Let us call to mind the circumstances in which he was placed. Here was a young man, blessed with that happiness which only youth can give, donning his epaulettes for the first time, and beholding, with all the fervour of a boy's enthusiasm and a man's ambition, the future opening out before him like a land of dreams. We must remember the poverty amid which he had been brought up and the uncertainty which, since his father's death, had overhung the future of his family and formed the sole preoccupation of this young apprentice to Life. Finally, we must take into account the glowing imagination, the ardour of heart, so characteristic of his race, with which he was endowed, and then we may, perchance, succeed in gaining some dim imperfect notion of the feelings of delight with which the son of the late M. Charles de Buonaparte went forth for the first time to display his golden epaulettes to the world. Beyond the very justifiable satisfaction he would be sure to experience in wearing them, and the lofty pride he would naturally take in the reflection that he owed them to his own industry, there was the transcendent happiness of knowing that his future was assured. Though no war should come to prosper his career—or it might be to stop it once for all—he would at the worst be able to retire with the rank

of captain of artillery and the distinction of the Cross of Saint Louis. Affluence it might not be, but in Corsica one could still keep up a certain position on it and play a part of some importance in the councils of the diocese of Ajaccio; and then, who could tell what might not happen—had not his father been representative of the nobility of the Island?

None of these considerations escaped the young officer, and he fell to musing on the thought that in the future he would not only cease to be a burden on his mother, who, poor soul, had been hard put to it to rear her numerous family on the slender means at her disposal, but that he would even be able to assist her with his money. The pay of a second lieutenant of artillery, however, was a very small affair—71 livres and 5 sols a month, but then, never having had any money of his own, he thought it sufficient for everything.

While thus calculating his resources, he was eagerly taking in the sights of Paris, running the gauntlet of the women of the Palais Royal who displayed their charms for hire, poor soiled commodities which might well have given pause to the most resolute purchaser, but which they freely offered for good hard cash. He felt that he was playing the man in strolling with seeming unconcern before this galaxy of human flesh—bare arms, naked shoulders, and undraped bosoms. But, like all the rest, it was no long time ere he "played the man" by yielding to the importunities of these purveyors of amorous delights. Is it not but too often on a sty of corruption that the fair flower of a young man's love first unfolds its petals?

Napoleon was conscious to a degree scarcely known to ordinary minds or the cold deliberate natures of the North, of all the wilder impulses of his sixteen summers; impulses which the conversation of his brother officers was hardly calculated to allay. There seems to be a continuous rivalry among young fellows of that age as to who shall commit the most outrageous follies, and the military uniform is far from being a check on their unbridled imaginations.

Who does not know, from his own experience, those feelings that come to a man in his youth, and in his youth alone; sensations that have their origin in an overflowing richness of vitality? Who has not felt the desire to cast off the shackles of things, a vague eagerness to perform some deed of devotion, of heroic self-sacrifice; who, in a word, has not been conscious of an infinite longing for the coming of Love? And who cannot recall the days when his heart was troubled by a kind of delicious ecstasy which cheated him with shadowy aspirations, and showed him life in the semblance of a lovely dream? A young man seems to take a pride in smothering such feelings as these, as though he were ashamed of them. In their stead, he parades a sort of sensual cynicism which slowly and surely tends to supplant all that is noble in his heart, to dry up the springs of his soul, and to create a wilderness in his mind. Those who have least felt the withering touch of corruption regard these sweet sensations of their young days as childish dreams unbecoming in the grown man. They would fain recall them in after years—these childish dreams —when their experience of men, aye, and of women,

too, has filched away the last remnants of poetry from their lives, and a barren scepticism has little by little usurped the place of those divine illusions of their youth. But the "sensitive" mind—to use an eighteenth-century expression—cannot thus recall the past without a pang of sorrow, and sometimes the memory is so sad and brings before our minds such cruel evidence of the disappointments of life, that tears flow unbidden from our eyes. Tears! Were we then born but to a heritage of sorrow?

Napoleon left Paris about the beginning of October, 1785. He was not alone, for one of his fellow-students at the École Militaire, young Alexandre des Mazis, had also been appointed to the regiment of La Fère, and bore him company on the road.

A companion was not unwelcome in those days of slow travelling, nor was Bonaparte the uncommunicative being he soon afterwards became. He was not sorry, therefore, to have at his side a friend to whom he could unburden himself of the outpourings of his gay southern spirit. The two young men endeavoured to outdo each other in talking, especially Bonaparte, who unfolded theories and arguments without number, all along the route. You inquire the subject of their conversation; but of what, pray, should they talk but of love, like all other men when their theme is neither politics, nor religion, nor business?

On their arrival at Lyons, Bonaparte went to visit a friend of his family, a M. Barlet who, learning that he was going into garrison at Valence, was so good as to furnish him with a letter of introduction to the Abbé

de Tardivon, formerly Abbot-General of Saint-Ruff, who resided in that town.

The Abbé de Saint-Ruff must not for a moment be likened to a priest of the present day. He was, in fact, a sort of "grand seigneur," a fine country gentleman, half cleric, half layman, cultured, worldly, and fond of society, particularly of the society of women. He welcomed the young officer with great warmth and introduced him to several people in Valence,[1] notably to Madame Grégoire du Colombier.

Madame du Colombier, who had passed her fiftieth year, was not without her good qualities. Women of her age are fond of quite young people; perhaps their innate feelings of maternity prompt them to safeguard and to guide the footsteps of young men as they go out for the first time into the world. Perhaps, too, their kindness of heart bids them preserve their protégés from gaining their knowledge of life by the bitterness of experience; or, it may be that they feel a certain amount of vanity in detailing their own experiences to others. Be this as it may, Madame du Colombier soon became charmed with the young lieutenant. His eager talk delighted her. She took pleasure in making him chat with her, and in correcting a few of those false impressions of the world entertained by people who have had no practical acquaintance with it. She was indeed a sort of mother to him in the counsels which she gave him. In 1786, as soon as the winter was over, she asked him to stay at her country

[1] The *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* erroneously states that it was Madame du Colombier who introduced Bonaparte to the Abbé de Saint-Ruff.

house, two leagues distant from Valence, and Bonaparte eagerly accepted the invitation.

Over and above the pleasure which Madame du Colombier took in conversing with the young man and in hearing him propound, with all his southern eloquence and enthusiasm, his strange theories and startling paradoxes, she may have been conscious of a desire of which she never openly made mention. She had a daughter, Mademoiselle Caroline, whom she would probably have liked to see asked in marriage by Bonaparte.

"Without any pretensions to remarkable beauty," says a woman who knew her later in life, "she must have been very pleasing. She was, above all, well proportioned, and her gracious manner with strangers was doubtless calculated to lend her an appearance of beauty which a riper acquaintance did not tend to diminish."[1] Madame d'Abrantès states in her *Mémoires* that she had heard from Napoleon's own lips that there had once been some talk of a marriage between Mademoiselle Caroline and himself, but the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* denies the statement of this gifted writer. "The assertion is false," we are told therein,[2] "as is also the report that I have heard repeated to the effect that her mother was in favour of the match but that her father was opposed to it." It is probable that Madame du Colombier would have been delighted if Napoleon had made a request for her daughter's hand, and it is equally certain that Napoleon, for his part, would have taken this step had he re-

[1] *Memoirs of the Duchesse d'Abrantès* (Garnier, 1893), Vol. VI, p. 15.
[2] *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* (Garnier), Vol. I, p. 102.

mained longer at Valence, for he had conceived a great liking for Mademoiselle Caroline, as is proved by the following passage in the *Mémorial:* "Napoleon took a fancy to Mademoiselle du Colombier, who on her side was not insensible to his advances. It was the first experience of the kind for both of them, and was of the nature to be expected from their age and education. 'No one could have been more innocent than we were,' said the Emperor; 'we often used to arrange little assignations. I recollect one in particular which took place at daybreak one morning in the middle of summer. It may not be credited, but our sole delight on that occasion consisted in eating cherries together.'"[1] Jean-Jacques and Mademoiselle Galley had scarcely gone any farther, and it is curious to note that these platonic cherries occupy a position of some importance in the history of the love-making of these two great geniuses, one of whom foretold the advent of the other,[2] and that they shed a gentle lustre over the whole of their lives, a memory at once gracious, pure, and idyllic, which subsequent love affairs, less ethereal, never completely obliterated.

It is not recorded whether Mademoiselle du Colombier also ate cherries on radiant June mornings with M. de Bressieux, ex-captain in the regiment of Lorraine and a Knight of St. Louis; but he it was whom she eventually married. He was undeniably older than the lieutenant of artillery, and it is possible that regrets, of more than one nature

[1] *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, Vol. I, p. 102.

[2] "I have a sort of presentiment that this little island (Corsica) will astonish Europe" (J. J. Rousseau, *Contrat Social*, Book II, chap. x.).

perhaps, entered into his young wife's remembrances of Bonaparte. As for the latter, he did not forget Madame de Bressieux any more than he forgot the episode of the cherries. When he returned from Egypt and was driving along the road to Paris, "he desired to send a special messenger to present his compliments to the Du Colombier ladies, thinking they were at Basseaux. He was, however, informed that they were residing at Bressieux, near Tullins, a little town in the department of the Isère, where Mademoiselle du Colombier had been living since her marriage on the 31st March, 1792, with Monsieur Gamparet de Bressieux."[1]

After he became Emperor, Napoleon still retained the recollection of the girlish companion of that far-off summer's dawn; nor indeed was she backward in reminding him of her existence, for we find the following letter, dated from the camp at Boulogne, amongst Napoleon's correspondence:—

"To Madame Caroline Bressieux.

"PONT-DE-BRIQUES, 2 fructidor, year XII.

"(20*th August*, 1804.)

"Madame,

"Your letter was a source of great pleasure to me. The memory of your mother, as well as of yourself, has never ceased to be of interest to me. I will avail myself of the first opportunity of assisting your brother. I see from your letter that you are living near Lyons, and I think it a little unkind of you not to have come over while I was there, for I shall always have great pleasure in seeing you. Be assured of my desire to be of service to you.

"NAPOLEON."[2]

[1] De Coston, *Premières années de Napoléon*, Vol. I, p. 82.

[2] *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier.* Vol. IX, p. 478, pièce 7948.

Shortly afterwards, Madame de Bressieux was appointed lady-in-waiting to the Emperor's mother. "She was," says the Duchesse d'Abrantès, "both witty and good, and her manners were at once gentle and agreeable. I can very well understand the Emperor going to gather cherries with her at six o'clock in the morning merely to talk to her and with no less worthy motive. A thing that struck me the first time I saw her was the interest she seemed to take in the Emperor's most trifling acts. She kept her eyes fixed upon him with an attention that could only come from the heart."[1]

After this first stay in Valence, where his love of society kept him clear of those sordid adventures which but too often prove a lasting hindrance in a young man's career, Napoleon went to Lyons, whither his regiment had been dispatched to repress some disaffection. Thence he proceeded to Douai. He subsequently applied for leave of absence and went to Ajaccio.

He passed through Marseilles some time in February, 1787. Was it there that he first saw Madame Saint-Huberti, the eminent singer? Madame d'Abrantès, who appears to have got her information from M. Maret, affirms that it was. However that may be, Madame Saint-Huberti was then singing in *Dido* with immense success. She shortly afterwards married the Comte d'Antraigues, the secret agent of the Bourbons at the time of the emigration, and ultimately died in London in 1812, being assassinated, together with her husband, by an Italian domestic.

[1] *Memoirs of the Duchesse d'Abrantès*, Vol. VI, p. 16.



Mlle DE SIREUIL,
de l'Académie Royale de Musique

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It is alleged that the young lieutenant was so moved by her voice that he wrote some verses in her honour and sent them to her. Among her triumphs on the operatic stage, Madame Saint-Huberti can not only count the distinction of reawakening the passion of love in the great literary genius of the nineteenth century (Chateaubriand), but she also had the good fortune, after playing in *Dido*, to inspire what were probably the only verses ever penned by the young artillery officer who afterwards became Napoleon the First.[1]

Monsieur de Goncourt no doubt found these verses in the *Mémoires* of Madame d'Abrantès. The worthy duchess assures us that she can guarantee their authenticity. At all events, they read as follows:—

Romains qui vous vantez d'une illustre origine,
Voyez d'où dépendait votre empire naissant:
Didon n'eut pas de charme assez puissant
Pour arrêter la fuite où son amant s'obstine,
Mais si l'autre Didon, ornement de ces lieux,
Eût été reine de Carthage,
Il eût, pour la servir, abandonné ses dieux,
Et votre beau pays serait encore sauvage.[2]

Madame d'Abrantès tells us that she obtained these verses from M. Maret, Duc de Bassano, and we must perforce give credence to her statement. We cannot refrain from observing, however, that, highly poetic as was Napoleon's nature, it is scarcely probable that he had any acquaintance with the rules of French prosody; he was such a sorry grammarian. When one reflects

[1] De Goncourt, *La Saint-Huberti*, p. 4.
[2] *Memoirs of the Duchesse d'Abrantès*, Vol. IX, p. 272.

that he was in the habit of saying *îles philippiques* instead of *Philippines*, *section* instead of *session*, *point fulminant* instead of *point culminant*, *rentes voyagères* for *rentes viagères*, *armistice* for *amnistie*,[1] and so forth, one naturally inquires how he could have been tempted to try his hand at versification, notwithstanding all the poetry he might have had in his heart. In the *Mémoires* of Lucien there is recorded a conversation between the two brothers which would tend to remove all doubt on the question whether, in his young days, Napoleon wrote verses.

"If the Citizen Consul, says Lucien, had cared to take up poetry, he would have shone at it just as he has at everything else he has undertaken.

"'Ah, when you speak of poetry! What a time it is since I wrote poetry, Lucien, old fellow! And do you really mean to tell me that you remember my first attempts?'

"'Indeed I do. Why, your story of our Curé de Gualdo delighted every member of the family, ay, and all the clever people in the country, the Pozzo di Borgos, for instance, the Barberis, and other worthies besides. How many times have I not read over to them with pleasure and pride that very *Curé de Gualdo*[2] of yours?'

"And continuing the conversation, Napoleon replied:

"'I might have had some taste for poetry, as you say; and now you remind me of our *Curé de Gualdo*, I confess it was not so bad.'

"There was perhaps something more than poetry in it; it also brought out his love for his country."

Napoleon, then, did write verses; but we must not assume that he wrote in French any more than in

[1] Chaptal, *Mes Souvenirs sur Napoléon*, p. 225.

[2] Jung, *Lucien et ses Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 137.

Italian. His was, no doubt, the native Corsican poetry which even at this day is chanted by certain inspired *voceratrice* of the island, extempore, and by instinct, so to speak, without any acquaintance with the rules of composition. The title of the piece, *Le Curé de Gualdo*, the names of the auditors, all go to prove that they were verses composed in the native Corsican dialect, such as those of which some examples are given in Prosper Merimée's *Colomba*. In Corsica, moreover, particularly in connexion with family events such as a birth, a marriage, etc., it is a very usual occurrence for people to recite what are called "sonetti," or, in the case of a death, "lamenti," a kind of weird, improvised incantation of an extraordinary richness of colour. It is the national custom to have them printed on squares of coloured satin or cambric, pink, blue, lilac, white, etc., with illuminated borders.

That Napoleon was in love with la Saint-Huberti for a few brief moments, perhaps even a few days, is quite possible; do not men of his age fall in love with every woman they meet? But that he wrote verses to her is less probable. At all events, the episode did not make the least impression on his life any more than it did on that of the illustrious singer herself; else it is certain that, notwithstanding the dislike she afterwards conceived for Napoleon, she would not have failed to boast, or at least to make mention, of the great man's little caprice; particularly in view of the events in Italy in 1796, and of her former friendship for Josephine.

Napoleon had arrived at Ajaccio in March, 1787. He returned shortly afterwards to the Continent, stopped a few days in Paris, and, having obtained an extension

of leave, went back once more to Ajaccio. He set out again at the end of January, 1788, and at length rejoined his regiment at Auxonne.

If in the course of his travels he became entangled in any intrigue or *liaison* of an amorous description, no record of it exists. At Auxonne, where he arrived on the 1st May, 1788, he found no Abbé de Saint-Ruff to procure him the *entrée* to the salons of the town, so he went less into society than at Valence. In fact, he did not go into society at all, and worked at such tremendous pressure that he ended by injuring his health.

In little country towns amusements are few and far between, and the officers at Auxonne used to club together to get up entertainments. They were all very fond of dancing—Bonaparte not less than the rest—and during the winter there was nothing for it, to keep boredom at a distance, but to give dances to the *grisettes* of the town.[1] These affairs, of course, were bound to bring a little crop of adventures in their train. It is all very well to be fond of dancing, but men of twenty are, as a general rule, still more taken up with their partners. It does not appear, however, that Bonaparte figured in even the most trivial romance during his first visit to Auxonne; a fact which did not prevent certain women from boasting, later on, that they had been on terms of the most affectionate intimacy with him during the period in question. But these women were simply drawing the long-bow, for their stories are devoid of the slightest foundation in fact.

[1] De Coston, *Premières années de Napoléon*, Vol. I, p. 153.

All that we know for certain is that the young lieutenant displayed a sort of liking, a kindly sympathy rather than love, for a young girl who we are told was very pretty and the centre of many admirers. This was Mademoiselle Manesca Pillet, the stepdaughter of a certain M. Chabert whom Bonaparte sometimes went to visit, not so often, however, as the young lady herself would appear to have desired.

But now an event took place which, though regrettable in itself, was the occasion of providing Bonaparte with a distraction somewhat less platonic in character.

"Towards the end of March, 1789, while a barge was being loaded with a cargo of wheat at Seurre on behalf of a merchant at Verdun, the people of the former place, fearing a famine, broke out into a riot and the military were summoned to restore order.

"A detachment of the regiment of La Fère was sent from Auxonne. Among the officers was a young lieutenant of rather delicate appearance, who spent his leisure in making excursions to Navilly, where he was interested in the construction of the fine bridge which spans the Doubs, or in conversing in terms of more or less intimacy with a young person of the house in which he was quartered. The lieutenant shortly afterwards left Seurre. . . . The young woman got married, but that is not the end of the story.

"At the head of a list of distinguished personages who were seeking the favour of a presentation to the Emperor Napoleon at Chalon, M. de Thiard[1] had gallantly placed the humble name of an unknown lady. When he perceived it, a faint smile played around the sternly compressed lips of the newly crowned Cæsar, who said to his chamberlain, 'It seems, then, that you

[1] *Conseiller général* for the Saône-et-Loire and candidate for the Legislative Body. He was Napoleon's chamberlain, and travelled with him in this capacity when he proceeded to Italy to be invested with the order of the Iron Crown.

know something of my garrison adventures. Well, keep the matter to yourself and let her enter.' The fair unknown, who was accompanied by a twelve-year-old son for whom she obtained a bursary in a Government school, came forth highly delighted with her audience of the Emperor and King, who was none other than the artillery lieutenant of 1789."[1]

Bonaparte had overworked himself during his first sojourn at Auxonne and his health had suffered in consequence. He therefore asked for six months' leave and went to spend the time in Corsica. He subsequently obtained an extension of his furlough in order to take the waters at Orezza. On recovering his health he returned to Auxonne.

He brought back with him to the Continent his brother Louis, a boy of thirteen. They lived together in two modest rooms, themselves performing the duties of their penurious establishment. The lieutenant's pay had to suffice for everything. As may be imagined, with such meagre resources, our officer was not in a position to include in his estimate of ways and means any expenditure on account of love affairs, for if money be the sinews of war it is none the less indispensable for love. Poetry and empty pockets are poor travelling companions, and "love in a cottage" the most misleading of sayings, for Cupid soon takes wing when he has nothing but a cottage to shelter him. And so, like the fox in the fable who found that the grapes which were beyond his reach were not worth eating, Bonaparte, after some reverse of which he naturally kept the details to himself, begins to rail against love in general, and it

[1] Général de Thiard.

is clearly in a moment of ill-humour that he pens the following lines which breathe spitefulness in every word. Read the little dialogue—it turns upon love—and recollect that it is the work of a lieutenant of twenty-two:—

"DES MAZIS. What, sir, you ask me what love is? Are you then made of different stuff from other men?

BONAPARTE. I am not asking you for a definition of love. I was once in love, and I still remember enough about the matter to enable me to dispense with those metaphysical definitions which only tend to confuse things. I do more than to deny its existence. I believe it to be positively injurious to society and to the individual happiness of man. In short, I believe the thing called love does more harm than good, and that it would be a blessing if some beneficent deity were to rid mankind of it altogether."[1]

Hapless youth! He is not rich enough to purchase love, so he denies its existence. But is it not after all the best way of doing without a thing? In 1795, when he had not the money to buy himself a pair of gloves, he said, in accordance with the same rule, that he did not wear them because they were a useless expense.

All the while he was writing these diatribes (in which, by the way, he did not in the least believe) he continued to frequent the houses to which he had the *entrée*. He visited M. Naudin, Commissioner for War, who was favourably disposed towards him; and also M. Chabert, not so much, we may be sure, for the pleasure of unfolding his elaborate theories for the benefit of that gentleman, as for that of chatting with

[1] Th. Jung, *Bonaparte et son temps*, Vol. I, p. 75.

his good-looking stepdaughter, Mademoiselle Manesca Pillet, who looked on him in a decidedly favourable light. It has, indeed, been stated that there was some talk of a match between them.[1]

But Bonaparte's departure in May, 1791, put an end to the matter. He was promoted first lieutenant, and was ordered again to Valence. There he resumed his former mode of life, but he went out a good deal less, being occupied with his brother's education. The Revolution, moreover, had just broken out, and the *émigration* which was then beginning closed the doors of a great many salons. Bonaparte was burning with all the enthusiasms of his youth and of the time. "The blood of the South," he writes to M. Naudin, "flows through my veins with the swiftness of the Rhone."[2] So far, however, as affairs of the heart were concerned, it flowed to no purpose; we can connect him with no *liaison* at this period. Besides, he did not remain long at Valence. He obtained fresh leave and went to Corsica. He took his brother back with him, and made a long stay at Ajaccio, arriving there early in October, 1791, and remaining until May, 1792. It was on the occasion of this visit that Napoleon, who had been made captain of artillery, applied for the post of lieutenant-colonel of the National Guard of Corsica. In this he was actuated by more reasons than one. The first, perhaps a very prosaic one, but from the penniless officer's point of

[1] There may still be preserved in the Chaberts' house certain ivory tablets on which the future conqueror of Europe had written the Christian name of his intended, whose salon he frequented (De Coston, *Premières années de Napoléon*, Vol. I, p. 153).

[2] De Coston, *Premières années de Napoléon*, Vol. I, p. 153.

view a very cogent one also, was the pecuniary reason. He was good to his people, and was anxious to go on helping them. In those troublous days the rents failed to come in, and the Signora Letizia had as much as she could do to feed and clothe all her brood of little ones. But another reason was that the new captain had some little intrigues on his hands, and these distractions always mean more or less expense, even at Ajaccio. That, indeed, is the least of their drawbacks, as Napoleon was very soon to learn from bitter experience. In his anxiety, therefore, to leave neither his family nor his mistress in the lurch, Napoleon preferred the post of lieutenant-colonel in the National Guard to that of a captain in the artillery, because the pay was better and would enable him to continue to help his family without parting from his mistress. Alas that for young men born without silver spoons in their mouths, love should always resolve itself into a question of money! But poverty, if it is a bar to the satisfaction of a young man's natural appetites, nevertheless preserves him from vice; for what is vice but the consequence of the over-satisfaction of those appetites, of an indulgence too far prolonged and too often repeated? Poverty has this further advantage for courageous souls: it gives them a power of resistance that is seldom vouchsafed to those who have never had any difficulties to overcome.

Napoleon, at Ajaccio, could not receive his mistress in his mother's house. He therefore hired rooms for her in a house situated at the entrance to Ajaccio, near the Porte de Mer, which belonged to an old lady called the Comtesse Rossi. The Duchesse d'Abrantès

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states that she is at a loss to understand why Napoleon did not live at his mother's house at this time;[1] Baron Hippolyte Larrey, with his ingenuous and indiscriminating admiration for all the members of the Imperial Family, says that it was in order that he might receive his friends in greater comfort.[2] Now "cherchez la femme" is an old detective maxim that may not unprofitably be applied in the elucidation of certain historical enigmas, and the Baron Larrey states, perhaps unconsciously, the reason why Napoleon did not at that period reside with his family. "He gave his mother," he says, "a great deal of anxiety in connexion with a love-affair with a woman who had conceived a violent passion for him and who was endowed with all the jealousy of her race. Having ascertained that she had been abandoned for another mistress, she resolved on vengeance. Inviting him to dinner she mixed poison with his wine and caused him to drink it at a draught. Later in the evening the most alarming symptoms supervened, and the young officer's life was in imminent danger. His mother, who had been immediately told of the matter, hastened to his side and prepared the remedies which the doctor had prescribed."[2]

Napoleon had a narrow escape. Some people will doubtless be found who would fain palliate the woman's crime. "There was some excuse for her," they will say, "her love was so great."

As soon as he had recovered from the consequences of his misadventure, Bonaparte was summoned to Paris and called upon to justify the extra leave he had taken

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 176.
[2] Baron H. Larrey, *Madame Mère*, Vol. I, p. 186.

without permission, in order, no doubt, to remain with such a loving creature. He managed to satisfy the authorities and, further than that, he persuaded them to agree to his returning to Corsica and resuming the command of the National Guard.

He did not arrive there until September. With him came his sister Marianne, whom he had recently brought away from Saint Cyr in consequence of a decree closing all the royal educational establishments.

For some time onward we hear of no further love affairs, his late adventure having doubtless somewhat chilled his ardour in this direction; the times, moreover, were scarcely propitious for love-making. Civil war had broken out in Corsica, the Bonapartes had to flee with the partisans of Paoli at their heels, and Napoleon only succeeded by a hair's-breadth in getting his family safely on board a vessel at Calvi. They landed at Marseilles in June, 1793. There they found themselves in the direst straits. Madame Letizia's eight children—who were all to occupy thrones with the single exception of Lucien, whose uncompromising republicanism would not suffer him to accept a princely crown save at the hands of the Pope—had then nothing to call their own except the clothes they stood up in. They were reduced to living on bread doled out to them daily by the Municipal Charity Organization of Marseilles.

Napoleon resumed his duties as captain of artillery, and, like the good son and good brother that he was, continued to share his pay with his family. The drain on his resources made the delights of love out of the question. Nevertheless, his heart was not in-

vulnerable, and on his return to Marseilles, with the rank of brigadier-general, after the siege of Toulon, he soon became conscious of a feeling of tenderness towards a daughter of a certain merchant of the town. Before proceeding further, however, we must mention that his brother Joseph, who had recently been appointed Commissioner for War, had made the acquaintance of a soap merchant at Marseilles named Clary, whose eldest daughter he had led to the altar. Inasmuch as beauty certainly played no part in bringing about this match, we are forced to the conclusion that it was Mademoiselle Julie's dowry that proved the great attraction. Barras informs us that "she was undersized, and her complexion pimply to the last degree. She was then," he adds, "just as absolutely plain and hideous as in her later years."[1] And yet, how many plain and penniless women have been married for their beauty! . . .

Madame Joseph Bonaparte had a sister Désirée who attracted Napoleon's attention, and, seeing how happy his sister-in-law was and the comfort that prevailed in her home, he too began to be possessed with ideas of matrimony. Penniless though he was then, it was a matter of indifference to him whether his bride were rich or poor, and marriage for him was summed up in the single word "woman!" that disturbing dream which troubles every young man on the threshold of life. It was in vain that he had written "Love is injurious to the individual happiness of man." Only a short time before he had also written, "The ivy twines its tendrils round the first tree it meets, and

[1] Barras, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 292.

there, in brief, is love's story." Was it not also to some extent his own story? Napoleon all his life was destined to base his conduct on this impression of his early years, and in affairs of the heart he ever acted with no deeper reflection than "the ivy which twines itself round the first tree it encounters." He became infatuated with the little girl Clary, just as later he lost his head over the widow Beauharnais. Désirée was "rather pretty, a great coquette, and very frivolous."[1]

Napoleon seems at all times to have had a weakness for women of this stamp: coquetry in a woman he readily interpreted as intelligence, but, like other men, only when he himself was the object of the coquetry. This is how the Duchesse d'Abrantès describes her: "She is a good-hearted creature enough, indeed perfectly harmless I should think, but an utter nonentity. Her character is absolutely colourless, and her heart, which has not a spark of life in it, responds to no appeal."[2] If her character merited this description, Désirée's heart was far from being as lifeless as the Duchesse d'Abrantès declared. There was no need for Bonaparte to make a second appeal to it; it responded with promptitude to the first. It was, indeed, so far from being dead—this heart of hers—that after enacting an idyll with the little Corsican general, the young girl fell in love with General Duphot her fiancé—which she had a perfect right to do. She afterwards suffered the horrible anguish of seeing him cut to pieces before

[1] General de Ricard, *Autour des Bonaparte*, fragmentary memoirs, p. 114.

[2] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 415.

her eyes. Subsequently, she became very fond of her husband, General Bernadotte—which it was her duty to do. So fond of him did she become that her attentions proved a positive plague for the poor Béarnais.[1] All this by no means hindered her, at the Restoration, from bestowing her affections on the Duc de Richelieu, and pursuing him with her importunities from one end of Europe to the other—and this it was neither her right nor her duty to do. If that is characteristic of a heart that is dead, it would be interesting to know what a living heart were like; for in spite of all these vicissitudes, it would appear that Désirée remained loyal to the memory of Bonaparte, and "it was thought that the embers of this still smouldering passion accounted for her determined refusal to leave France."[2]

But to return to Napoleon and his passion for his sister-in-law; it is certain that before the 13 vendémiaire he was anxious to marry her. "He was envious," says Bourrienne, "of the happiness of his brother Joseph, who had just got married, at Marseilles, to the daughter of a wealthy and highly respected merchant of that town. 'How comfortable that rascal of a Joseph is!' Such was his way of expressing the little feelings of envy which he frequently betrayed."[3] As for Mademoiselle Clary, fickle, frivolous, and very young as she was, it must be confessed that she fell very deeply in love with the General. The latter never wrote to his brother without sending her his remembrances and regards. Nor must it be thought that this was mere

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 415.
[2] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 131.
[3] Bourrienne, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 72.

commonplace civility on his part. Though, on the 22nd May, 1795, he only says, "Remember me to your wife and Désirée," a month later, on the 25th June, he writes, "Désirée has asked me for my portrait, and I am getting it done for her. You can give it to her *if she still wishes for it;* if not, keep it for yourself." Thereafter Désirée goes with her sister and her brother-in-law to Genoa. The length and the fatigue of the journey, perhaps a spice of indolence into the bargain, prevent her from writing, and Napoleon ascribes her silence to neglect. "It must be," he writes to his brother, "that you have to cross the river Lethe to get to Genoa, for Désirée has never written to me since her arrival." Is it then by silence that a woman teaches man his lesson? Silence, at all events, is what stings him most. On the 19th July Napoleon returns to the charge and still complains that he has had no letters. "I have not had a line from Désirée since she has been at Genoa"; and on the 25th, as he had still not heard, he insists on his brother sending him some account of her. "I believe," he says, "that you keep me in the dark about Désirée on purpose. I don't even know whether she is alive or dead." And then, as there had evidently been some question about sending him to Nice, we suddenly find him in high spirits, for Nice is no great way from Genoa, and at Genoa is Eugénie Désirée! "If I go to Nice," he says to his brother, "we shall see each other, and Désirée will be there too." He grows more and more impatient, and writes two days later, "You never tell me a word about Mademoiselle Eugénie." He is clearly vexed at his brother's unkindness and at the young girl's off-hand

conduct, for instead of calling her Désirée, the name by which she went among her family, he refers to her as Eugénie or Mademoiselle Eugénie.

At length letters come. Bonaparte is delighted, but he cannot forbear scolding his brother, whom he taxes with being responsible for all the delay and neglect. "I have received a letter from Désirée which seems as if it had been written ages ago; you never said a word about it."

It was after the receipt of this letter that he felt convinced that Désirée shared his affections, a result he had certainly done his utmost to bring about. From that time forward, his thoughts were directed towards making her his wife, and he began to unmask his batteries. It was, of course, to Joseph, the diplomat of the family and the young lady's brother-in-law, that he entrusted the conduct of the negotiations. He wrote him on the 5th September: "If I stay here I may be tempted to make a fool of myself and get married. Just send me a line saying what you think about it; it might perhaps be as well to mention the matter to Eugénie's brother. Tell me what comes of it, and I will abide by the result." A day's reflection confirmed him in his resolve, for the very next day he says to his brother, "Continue to keep me exactly informed. Tell me what you wish to do, and endeavour to arrange matters so that my absence may not hinder the attainment of the object I have at heart. This affair with Eugénie must be settled one way or the other. I shall be very anxious to get your reply."[1]

[1] These letters are to be found in the Memoirs of the Comte de Survilliers (King Joseph), Vol. I, *passim*.

And there the tale stops short. Time goes by, and the question thus broached still remains unsolved. The truth is that Bonaparte's matrimonial ideas were undergoing some modification amid the surroundings of Parisian society. He still thinks of marrying, but it has begun to dawn on him that the girl whom he had thought of would be decidedly out of her element in the sort of society he had begun to frequent. He told Junot, his aide-de-camp, who had asked for the hand of his sister Pauline, that he could not assent to seeing her marry an officer without money of his own. The fact is that his horizon is extending. He enters the mixed society of the Luxembourg, cultivates Barras and visits the beautiful Citoyenne Tallien, the Citoyennes Mailly de Châteaurenault, de Navailles. . . . Ambition takes hold of him, and he perceives that by means of the influential connexions he has succeeded in creating, he has it in his power to attain to high military command. The little Clary would undoubtedly feel most uncomfortably strange in the company of all these fashionable women, and, besides, marrying her would not help him on in the least. In his position, everything he did and everything he said should tend to bring him to the fore, and a clever marriage would give him an opportunity which he would not fail to use to the utmost advantage. Such, no doubt, was his line of thought. Had he not previously written to Fesch, "Send me a hundred écus to take me to Paris; that is the only place where one can succeed"? Again he writes: "Here alone of all places in the world women are worthy of taking the helm. . . . A woman should spend six months in Paris to find out what is

due to her. . . ." And a few days later, "The women here, who are the most beautiful in the world, are the 'grande affaire.'" 29897

Bonaparte, then, is overjoyed at discovering Paris with all its sorceries and sorceresses, and he studies all these things which are practically a new world to him. But poor, destitute, and without pay, his aim is not only to extricate himself from present difficulties, but to lay foundations for the future. He knows—for he himself has recorded it—that a man can obtain anything through women, if only he knows how to work them. He therefore begs Madame de Tallien to use her influence to get some cloth from the Government stores sent to him in order that he may have a new uniform made, and so appear to less disadvantage in the salons where he was anxious to gain a footing. Then a marriage would consolidate his position. But while still preserving his feeling of affection for Mademoiselle Clary, he calculated that it would be against his interests to marry her; that she could only arrest or, at the very least, hamper his progress; and that even from her own point of view it were better that he should not marry her. And as on her part, Désirée displayed no great eagerness to have him—the 13 vendémiaire had not yet arrived to make him famous—he transferred his allegiance elsewhere. Nevertheless, he did not forget Désirée. As soon as ever he had repressed the Royalist rising in Paris with the ability and energy that have now passed into history, he wrote off in the fulness of his joy to Joseph: "Fortune is on my side: my love to Eugénie and Julie." And a little further on, "A kiss for your wife and Désirée from me."

The recollection of this little idyll was never destined to fade from Bonaparte's memory. Not even when he became an illustrious general, not as Consul, not even as Emperor did he ever cease to retain an affectionate regard for her whom he had once desired to wed, and in his acts of kindness he never failed to remember her. Thus it came to pass that, when at Cairo he heard that Mademoiselle Clary was affianced to General Bernadotte, he wrote as follows to his brother Joseph: "I wish Désirée every happiness if she marries Bernadotte. She deserves it." Afterwards, amid the unexampled splendours which surrounded him, he still thought of her, and, in the presents which he made her, treated her precisely as a member of his own family. Was it not to the influence of this sweet and tender memory that this ruffian of a Bernadotte owed his escape from death or disgrace after his blazing indiscretions at Rennes, Auerstaedt, and Wagram?

It has often been said that M. Clary had refused point-blank to give his daughter to Napoleon, saying, "One Bonaparte in my family is quite enough." Certainly his daughter Julie had no great reason to congratulate herself upon having married Joseph, who rapidly proved himself one of the most faithless of husbands. Still, the saying could not have originated with M. Clary, as Joseph, in one of his letters, points out: "I was married," he says, "in Provence; M. Clari [*sic*], my wife's father, could never have given expression to the nonsense attributed to him by the scandalmongers, for the simple reason that he had been dead several years before my marriage, and that

I never knew him."[1] However, the expression must have been used, for it is not only found in all contemporary memoirs, but it is repeated by General de Ricard,[2] a connexion by marriage of the Clary family. The only conclusion to be drawn from all this is that it was Madame Clary and not her husband who pronounced this piquant "mot."

We must now retrace our steps a little. In 1794, the very year that Joseph Bonaparte married Mademoiselle Clary, Napoleon was ordered to join the army of the Alps. With it were two Representatives of the People. One of them, Turreau, an individual of no great note, had just contracted a second marriage with the daughter of a surgeon at Versailles, and had seen fit to bring his wife with him on his mission to the army. Could one imagine a more imprudent act and one better calculated to bring about mishaps than to introduce into a military camp, at a period when morality was at a very low ebb, a woman who was not only young and exceedingly pretty, but just as great a flirt as she was good-looking? Events happened as might have been expected. The brilliant Citoyenne Turreau, who, like all coquettes, managed her husband, managed the mission as well. Bonaparte, needless to say, had, in company with all the other generals, been invited to the representative's quarters. He had found favour in Turreau's eyes but still more favour in his wife's, and the family swiftly became infatuated with the lank-haired Corsican. In-

[1] Letter from the ex-King Joseph to Major Lee, reproduced by M. Jules Claretie in *l'Empire, les Bonaparte et la Cour*, p. 206.

[2] General de Ricard, *Autour des Bonaparte*, fragmentary memoirs.

vitations to dinner and to quiet, informal little parties became a common occurrence. Bonaparte accepted the situation, and derived a double advantage from this friendship. A Representative of the People on a special mission was an important personage whose influence might be useful; it was wise therefore to propitiate him. The Citoyenne Turreau being very pretty, it might be no less profitable to propitiate *her*. The General succeeded in doing both. He was, indeed, on such excellent terms with the lady that in his anxiety to demonstrate his gratitude for the favours she bestowed on him, he offered her one day the sight of an outpost engagement which he caused to take place in her honour, just as, later on, he commanded displays of fireworks in honour of the sovereigns he received in Paris. He himself tells the story of this incident of his early days: "I was one day making a tour of inspection with Madame Turreau among our positions in the neighbourhood of the Col di Tende, when the idea suddenly occurred to me of giving her a notion of what real warfare was like, and I therefore ordered the outposts to move forward to the attack. It is true our side had the best of the fighting, but, of course, no advantage could come of it, and it involved the loss of a certain number of lives. Every time I think of it I reproach myself deeply for this action."[1]

Napoleon was right in reproaching himself; it relieves us from using harsher terms. Still, if any excuse could exist for such an altogether inexcusable act as paying for a mistress's favours by a sacrifice of

[1] Stendhal, *Vie de Napoléon*, p. 69.

human life, it might be sought in the fact that such deeds were somewhat in accordance with the customs of the day; and a man's character must always be regarded in close relationship with his times. Already, shortly before the Revolution, Prince Charles de Nassau-Siegen, having taken it into his head to give some ladies of his acquaintance a representation of a bombardment, caused two great towers of his castle to be demolished by cannon. That amusement was innocent enough since his castle walls and his fortune were his own and he was at liberty to make a breach in both of them if he liked, and no one was any the worse. But a somewhat less innocent entertainment was that which Potemkin provided for his nieces at the siege of Oczakoff. It has a considerable resemblance to that which Bonaparte gave to Citoyenne Turreau. He gave orders to capture a Turkish vessel by boarding it, his object being to afford the young ladies the spectacle of a naval combat. It was Potemkin, too, who, also at the siege of Oczakoff, gave orders to storm the position before the breach was prepared, in order that his mistress, Madame Dolgoroucki, might be provided with a distraction of no ordinary character. The Russians lost eight or ten thousand men, but the woman was pleased. That is a sort of attention which the republican General Bonaparte ought scarcely to have borrowed from the customs of the *ancien régime*. However, he has made the *amende honorable* and so there is no more to be said about the matter. All we need add is that "one day after he had become Emperor he saw once more the lovely wife of the representative of Nice whom he had known and loved so long ago.

She was then a widow, and so greatly altered that he hardly knew her. She was, moreover, in circumstances of extreme poverty. But the Emperor took a pleasure in granting her all she asked. He realized, he himself says, all her dreams, ay, and more than all."[1] Such is ever the reward of virtue here below.

[1] *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, Vol. I, p. 125.

CHAPTER II

Bonaparte as he appeared in 1795—Madame de Bourrienne—Bonaparte at M. de Marmont's house at Châtillon—Victorine de Chastenay; a poetical young lady—A vision, a memory and a "profil perdu"—A conversation with Mademoiselle de Chastenay; Bonaparte's secret affection for her—Bonaparte goes gathering cornflowers with her—Conclusion of an idyll—The General's remarks about the women of Paris—Madame Permon; Bonaparte makes her a proposal of marriage—Mademoiselle Montansier—Madame Grace Elliot—Bonaparte and the 13th Vendémiaire—He frequents the residence of Barras—Madame Tallien; Bonaparte falls in love with her—Madame Beauharnais; the General is ensnared by her wiles and marries her—His miscalculations in love—Madame Grassini.

AFTER the disbanding of the force entrusted with the task of carrying out the *coup-de-main* on Civita Vecchia, Bonaparte, who had been in command of the artillery, received orders to take up a similar command in the Army of the West. This was the reverse of welcome to him and he proceeded to Paris with the view of obtaining service elsewhere.

He set out from Marseilles on the 2nd May 1795 in company with Junot, Marmont and his brother Lucien. The little party had arranged to spend a few days *en route* at the house of Marmont's father at Châtillon and then to go on to Paris.

Here it may not be amiss briefly to describe Bonaparte as he appeared in 1795. A lady who saw him at this time made a note of her impressions and gave it

to Stendhal. "He was," she says, "by far the thinnest and the most singular-looking being I had ever encountered. In accordance with the fashion of the times, he allowed his hair to grow right down to his shoulders after the manner known as *oreilles de chien* or hound's ears. The peculiar and occasionally sombre expression that is a distinguishing characteristic of the Italians hardly goes well with such a huge quantity of hair. Instead of giving one the idea of a man fired with the enthusiasm of genius, it but too often suggests the sort of individual one would rather not meet after nightfall near a wood. Nor was Bonaparte's costume calculated to modify this effect. His overcoat was so threadbare, and his whole appearance so exceedingly unkempt that I could scarcely believe at first that he was really a general. I perceived at once that he was a man of genius or at all events someone very much out of the common run. I remember noticing a similarity between his expression and that of J. J. Rousseau, with which I was familiar from Latour's excellent portrait.

"When I had seen this general of the curious name some three or four times I ceased to find fault with his exaggerated *oreilles de chien*. He merely struck me as a provincial inclined to overdo the fashion, but, in spite of this absurdity, a man who might possess considerable merit. Bonaparte had a very engaging expression which used to light up his features as he talked.

"If he had not been so painfully thin as almost to suggest the idea that he was suffering from some wasting disease, his features would have been remarkable

for their refinement. The lines of his mouth were particularly attractive. An artist, one of David's pupils, who was a visitor at M. N——'s, where I used to see the General, said that his features were of the classical Greek mould, and that gave me a respect for him."[1]

This portrait has been traced almost line for line by another woman who saw more of Napoleon at this period than anyone else of her sex. From the window of her house in the Quai Conti, she used to watch him coming along "with an awkward and slovenly gait, a shabby round hat dragged over his eyes and his hair *à l'oreille de chien*, ill-powdered and ill-combed, floating carelessly over the collar of his famous grey overcoat. His long thin dirty hands were innocent of gloves, which he said were a useless expense; his boots were ill-made and unpolished. But he had an expression on his face and a smile that were ever admirable."[2]

So much for externals. This peculiar appearance was scarcely of a kind to find favour in women's eyes, although Madame d'Abrantès and Stendhal's friend have both remarked on the beauty of his expression, but this, perhaps, was when his triumphs had been won and the world was resounding with his no less peculiar name. Nevertheless, his appearance, for all its singularity, gave evidence of an eager restless spirit within, of a vast ambition and an indomitable will.

When one wishes to portray a man in his relations with the opposite sex, it is obviously necessary to acquaint oneself with the opinions entertained regard-

[1] Stendhal, *Vie de Napoléon*, p. 74.
[2] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 195.

ing him by the women who were attracted by him. Their evidence is to be looked upon as of paramount importance. One of them, Madame de Bourrienne, who in spite of her phenomenal ugliness loved him and "persecuted him with her ridiculous attentions—she thought to win his heart by giving him good dinners!"[1]—wrote: "The day after our second return from Germany, in 1795, we found Bonaparte at the Palais Royal in the office of a man named Girardin. Bonaparte embraced Bourrienne like a comrade that he loved and was glad to see again. We went to the Théâtre-Français, where they were playing a tragedy followed by a piece called *Le sourd ou l'auberge pleine.* All the audience were convulsed with laughter, Bonaparte alone—and I was particularly struck by it—maintained a frigid silence. A little later he disappeared without a word, and when we were thinking he had left the theatre, we caught sight of him away up in the second or third tier in a box by himself, with a look of savage boredom on his countenance."[2]

Bored indeed he may quite possibly have been, without Madame Bourrienne knowing it, by that lady's extraordinary plainness, but, besides that, Napoleon's mind was filled with a matter that overshadowed every other consideration, a matter which, although it took on the outer form and colour of love-sickness, was the very reverse of poetic. The General in fact was worrying about the future and, being without a penny to his name, was wondering how in the world he was going to keep body and soul together. That was

[1] Stendhal, *Vie de Napoléon*, p. 76.
[2] Bourrienne, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 78.

hardly the sort of thing to make the young man's fancy turn to thoughts of love. Still, Bonaparte was but twenty-six years old, and the slightest gleam of colour amid the drab monotony of his existence made him acutely sensitive of the richness of life. The sight, the conversation of a woman stirred him to his inmost depths.

There took place about this time an event the memory of which remained with him through life, shedding like a delicious perfume its fragrance over all his days; and this he owed to a passing acquaintance with a young girl whom he met about a month after his return from serving with the Army of the Alps. It was no love-affair, not even an idyll such as that in which he had figured with Mademoiselle Clary. It was scarcely more than a *causerie* which he enjoyed one summer afternoon in the country with a bright and accomplished girl. They talked—and of what? Oh! not of love at all, but of politics, war, history and metaphysics, and then there followed some music and, finally, a little dancing; and the result of it all was that the features of this charming girl, with something almost boyish about them perhaps, remained graven in the General's heart with all the clear-cut delicacy of an antique cameo. It was but a fleeting and transitory vision and became but a far-off memory, but it was a memory as sweet as it was ineffaceable; one such as M. Bourget would rank among his "profils perdus." This is how it came to pass. Marmont, captain of artillery, being about to spend a few days with his father at Châtillon-sur-Seine, had asked his General to give him the honour of his

company. Bonaparte consented, and Junot, his second aide-de-camp, also made one of the party. The residence of M. de Marmont is mentioned by a neighbour of his, a lady, who left behind her, together with a literary reputation—now quite forgotten—a collection of Memoirs of greatly superior merit to the works which gave her that reputation. We are told by her that M. de Marmont's house, the manor of the district of Sainte-Colombe, was situated in the town of Châtillon itself, but at one of its extremities. It was called Le Châtelot. Marmont had given his father a most glowing account of General Bonaparte, and afterwards wrote, when recalling this period of his early days: "I found his ideas far above any that I had ever encountered in my life! He talked, when we were alone, with such a thorough grasp of things and with such infinite charm! . . ."[1] Fired with his son's enthusiasm, M. de Marmont spread abroad a most favourable report of the General's good qualities.

When Bonaparte arrived, the problem was how to entertain him. As the natural features of the country had no particular attractions to offer, recourse was had to social distractions, and they introduced him to some of the families of the neighbourhood. In spite of all the Marmonts had said in his favour, notwithstanding the pleasure which country-people always experience in seeing new faces, in spite, too, of the taste for social gatherings, which was far keener in those days than it is in ours, the reception accorded to General Bonaparte was anything but cordial. "The

[1] Duc de Raguse, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 60.

memory of the Terror was still fresh enough to cause people to avoid rather than to welcome anyone and anything that wore a republican exterior. The reactionary temper of the times even permitted the display of a certain aversion for these 'blue-coated officers' as people called them, and if we had not been above all petty provincial prejudices, we should not have received the little General who was unhesitatingly termed an imbecile by those who had seen him."[1] The common run of people are, indeed, wont to treat as such all those who, by reason of their intellectual superiority, disdain or fail to understand their foolish babble and inept amusements. When a man of brains finds himself in the society of his intellectual inferiors, does he not in fact appear to a great disadvantage? This was the case with Bonaparte at Châtillon, and his persistent taciturnity only tended to confirm those simpletons in their judgment.

Amongst the people to whom Bonaparte was introduced were the de Chastenays. In the course of the visit, Mademoiselle Victorine, a young girl of twenty-two, was asked to play and she readily complied. Bonaparte complimented her, but in brief abrupt terms. Being next requested to sing, she rendered an Italian ballad which she herself had set to music. She asked Bonaparte if her pronunciation was good, and with still greater brevity he curtly answered "No."

This was not encouraging. Nevertheless, the ice had been broken, and the following day the de Chastenays went to Le Châtelot to a dinner given in Napoleon's

[1] Madame de Chastenay, *Mémoires*, Vol. I.

honour. Mademoiselle Victorine was put on her mettle by the General's brusque demeanour, and her curiosity was excited by an individuality which seemed to be so totally different from any she had hitherto had experience of, to judge at least by the strange fires which gleamed from the eyes deep set in his thin eager face and by the fanatical eulogies uttered by Marmont and Junot, over whom he appeared to exercise a sort of magic spell. She therefore approached him as soon as dinner was over, and in order to draw him into conversation asked him about Corsica, a country but little known at that time. She could have chosen no topic better calculated to extract from him anything more than a mere "yes" or "no."

The company had risen from the table, and the General and the young girl were chatting together leaning upon a console between two of the windows. Mademoiselle de Chastenay was enchanted by the sparkling originality, the graphic expressiveness and the richness of colour that characterised Bonaparte's conversation. As he talked, picture after picture was conjured up before her eyes like antique cameos on a golden girdle. "I had never met anyone," she afterwards wrote, "who appeared to me so clever." Of what then did they discourse, these two young people? To tell the truth, Bonaparte practically monopolised the conversation. He reviewed the Revolution synthetically; deducing the most novel inferences from arguments wonderful in their lucidity. Then he spoke of the actors in the drama and of the parts they had played, touched on the Civil Wars, passed thence to a consideration of the aristocracy, and finally, by a

perfectly natural association of ideas, returned once more to the Revolution.

Everything he said was deeply thought out and clearly expressed in a few concise, graphic and telling words, as brilliant and clear-cut as newly minted coins. Never had Mademoiselle Victorine heard anyone talk so well; she was absolutely enthralled. The charm of his words affected her like some strange and subtle perfume, as though he were enveloped in the wild fragrance of his own mysterious isle.

Politics, the Revolution and the Civil Wars were not their sole topics of conversation. Young people are not slow to forsake such subjects for others more attractive. They talked of poetry also. Bonaparte was a votary of Ossian, and he spoke with enthusiasm of the gentle and melancholy delight with which the memory of the songs of the Scottish bard, wild and free as the mountain mists, had filled his heart. He waxed eloquent, and cast over his subject the glamour of his own genius. The young girl was more and more carried away—after the loftiest discussion of the causes and effects of the Revolution came poetry! Ossian with a commentary by Bonaparte! Was not that a rare delight for a mind so delicate, so refined and so ardent as hers? Mademoiselle Victorine never dreamt that such a breadth of view and such versatility could be attained by anyone. Bonaparte was well aware of the impression he was creating. Ascribing it perhaps to Ossian and his verse, he offered to bring her a collection of his poems. Mademoiselle Victorine was on the point of accepting when she was overcome by a sort of provincial bashfulness quite unworthy of

her. She blushed stupidly at the thought of receiving a book from a soldier, and, thanking him awkwardly, declined the proffered gift. It thus happened that a similar visit, which might have exerted such a decisive influence over the fate of both, did not take place. Again and again did Mademoiselle Victorine reproach herself for her foolishness.

From Ossian it was an easy transition to Bernardin de Saint Pierre, and *Paul et Virginie* came under discussion. Both gave their appreciations of the value of the work, and Bonaparte's statement that the book owed its interest principally to the tragic dénouement of the story made a great impression on the young girl. They also discussed the nature of happiness, and she was no less struck by the idea, so true and so epigrammatically expressed, that "for man it ought to consist in the highest development of his faculties."

Such a superabundance of ideas welling up one after the other, like great jets from a hidden spring, completely enraptured Mademoiselle de Chastenay's quick and impressionable mind. In the country one seldom gets an overdose of depth and originality in conversation, and almost of necessity the mind grows narrow and stunted among people whose lives are wholly wrapped up in themselves and their domestic affairs, and where everyone seems clad in a uniform mantle of leaden dulness. And so, carried away by delight, the young girl laid bare the secrets of her heart, and Bonaparte, feeling that he was understood and appreciated, took a deep and delicate pleasure in displaying for her delectation all the fire and sparkle of his intellect. Vanity and dawning affection were not

wholly absent therefrom. They were like two strangers whom chance has brought together and who, discovering to their delight that they understand each other, endeavour to sound the depths of each other's heart, exchange questions and answers with eager joy, and say farewell with regret.

They met more than once. On each occasion the conversation turned upon serious subjects, politics, as was right in those troublous days, occupying the place of honour. Then there came a stroll in the fields, and he who was to subjugate the world might have been seen helping a young girl to gather cornflowers! "They made us play children's games in the drawing-room at Le Châtelot," says Madame de Chastenay, who likes to dwell on this fresh and innocent idyll. "It happened that during a game of forfeits he had to go down on his knees before me—he who was soon to behold Europe on its knees before him. Then we had round dances. Our fellow-countryman Junot, who was the General's aide-de-camp and was afterwards created a General and Duc d'Abrantès, played the familiar old air '*Mon berger n'est-il pas drôle?*' for us to dance to, and a fine noise we made of it."

We can scarcely picture to ourselves General Bonaparte, with all the cares that were then besetting him, joining in these boisterous country games and taking part in scenes that might have recalled the pictures of Lancret and Boucher. Mademoiselle Victorine, however, seems to have bewitched him.

On the following day, just as they were about to set out for another rustic entertainment, the news arrived that General Bonaparte had been relieved of his com-

mand. Not understanding in the least what this meant, he resolved not to stay a day longer at Châtillon. He went to bid farewell to the de Chastenays, found only the mother at home, and then set out on his journey. "It would be difficult," wrote Madame de Chastenay, "to express how surprised and grieved I felt."

But when all is said and done the whole incident reveals no more than the mere beginnings of a mutual attraction. It did not constitute even the opening chapter of a romance. Bonaparte, however, retained a deep and tender recollection of these meetings so brief, so pure and so sweetly ineffaceable. This time cornflowers took the place of cherries. Afterwards, when wedded to the Veuve Beauharnais, and covered with the glory of his triumphs in Italy and Egypt, when he was First Consul of the French Republic, Bonaparte spoke of this *rencontre* to his wife, in such a manner apparently as to excite her jealousy.

One day during the Consulate, Mademoiselle de Chastenay solicited and obtained an audience of Madame Bonaparte in order to enlist her influence in procuring the removal of a certain person's name from the list of *émigrés*. During the interview the Chief Consul entered the room. "I was somewhat taken aback," she says, "for I had not seen him since the old Châtillon days. Shall I confess that he was a little surprised, nay, even slightly embarrassed? It is nevertheless perfectly true. He saw who I was, and coming up to me enquired for my mother and then, all of a sudden, asked whether M. de Marmont was still in love with me. I replied with some vexation that I did not think he ever had been and, moreover, that

he had been married for two years. Thereafter the questions only had reference to my musical talents, of which Bonaparte spoke in flattering terms. He made me promise to come and spend the evening with them sometimes, and then, begging me to excuse him, left the room without another word, followed by Madame Bonaparte, who, however, returned a moment later.

"People may believe what they will," continues Mademoiselle de Chastenay, "and I myself have never understood the matter, but, during the whole of the conversation, the patronising tone of which was scarcely to my taste, Madame Bonaparte was trembling like a leaf. It is perfectly true that she overwhelmed me with her civilities, but she always kept me at a distance from her husband. At that time I was hardly in a position to excite her jealousy, although I was not without attractions. I was acquainted with her brothers-in-law, who were then doing everything in their power to get Bonaparte away from her, and pamphlets of all kinds were being brought out with the object of inducing him to divorce her. But how can I tell what she thought of me, seeing that she knew me so slightly? However it may be, I concluded the interview by requesting her to obtain an audience for me. This she undertook to do, but never fulfilled her promise."[1]

There is no reason to doubt the veracity of this account; everything goes to show that it is correct and sincere, even down to the Consul's strange jest about Marmont being in love with Mademoiselle de Chastenay. If he *did* ask the question—and he knew perfectly

[1] Madame de Chastenay, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 417.

well that Marmont had never thought about her at all —it means that he was still thinking of her himself. He had not even been able to help speaking about her to Josephine and telling her that he had been a good deal more struck by her cleverness and accomplishments than by her beauty, for beautiful she was not. How like Napoleon it was to tell his wife all about his little conquests and his slightest fancies! And why should he hush up what was only a dawning affection, a purely platonic affair that was all past and done with, and possessed merely a "retrospective" interest? This is the explanation of Josephine's jealousy; she feared a revival of old affections and so simply decided on keeping the young girl out of her husband's way. It was the safer course, and one cannot blame her for adopting it.

Napoleon's letters to his brother Joseph during the summer of 1795 throw a light on the real thoughts and views of the man who was destined to set out a year later on his triumphant progress across Europe.[1] One of them, dated 18th July, reveals, in a picture he draws of Paris, how marked a change had taken place in Bonaparte's outlook. "Luxury, pleasure and the fine arts," he says, "are recovering their ground here in a marvellous manner. Yesterday at the Opera there was a benefit performance of *Phèdre* on behalf of a retired singer. From two in the afternoon an immense crowd began to collect before the doors, despite the fact that they were charging three times the ordinary prices for admission. Carriages and the fashionable throng have reappeared or rather reawakened after

[1] *Vide* Comte de Surviliers (roi Joseph), *Mémoires*, Vol. I.

the long nightmare—as it seems to them—which interrupted their course of gaiety. Libraries are open and there is a continual round of lectures on all sorts of subjects—history, chemistry, botany, astronomy and so on. Nothing is wanting to amuse and to make life pleasant. People seem to flee from their own thoughts. And how can one look on the black side of things when there is such a ceaseless succession of amusements and occupations to distract the mind? Women are to be seen everywhere, in the theatre, in the park, in the library, and even—very pretty ones too—in the study of the savant. Here in Paris of all places in the world women are worthy of taking the helm; as for the men, they rave about them and think of and live for them alone."

There we have a little picture of Parisian life very ably sketched in; but are the foibles which he ascribes to the men—justly enough it must be confessed—anything but the reflection of his own particular foibles? Ay, the women. There you have it! They it is that haunt his fevered imagination, and who is it but the coquettes of Paris that make him forget his own coquette Désirée. He is still dreaming of marriage. "How happy he is, that rascal of a Joseph!" he exclaims sometimes. And he himself wants to be happy like his brother. But his must be a marriage that would help him on in the world. Désirée would assist him in nothing; she might even do him an injury with her provincial manners and her Marseilles twang. So he gave her up and transferred his attentions to a widow, one who entertained lavishly without being too squeamish about the people she received, in whose

drawing-room men of the old and new régime rubbed shoulders together. This was Madame Permon, a Corsican by birth and a friend of the Signora Letizia, whom she had known at Ajaccio. Bonaparte was one of the habitués of her house, and in return for the place which he often found laid for him at her table—which, by the way, relieved him from the necessity of procuring at a restaurant a dinner he would have been put to hard shifts to pay for—he rendered the Permon family many little services, and some important ones too. After the death of her husband it appears that Madame Permon lost all interest in life, and was in danger of falling into a decline. The most efficacious remedy her medical adviser could think of to banish her cares was a nightly visit to a theatre. What did she do, therefore, but take a box by the month at the Théâtre Feydeau. To avoid uncharitable comment—for theatre-going is not the conventional manner of mourning a departed husband—the box was furnished with a screen. It was after one of these performances, which had proved most beneficial to the widow's health, that Bonaparte had a very remarkable conference with her. His proposal was nothing less than that her son should wed his sister Pauline, that Mademoiselle Laure Permon should marry one of his brothers, Louis or Jerôme, and finally—here he became a little embarrassed and confessed that the theme of matrimony had rather carried him away—that they, Madame Permon and himself, should set an example to the others by getting married themselves. At this point he bent low and kissed her hand, possibly because it was a pretty one, possibly because he considered his proposal

rather out of the ordinary and wished to avail himself of this pretext to keep his eyes on the ground for a while.

Madame Permon, although she had a son of twenty-five, was still pretty and attractive and, more than that, she was good-natured, frank—rather too frank indeed—and pleasant into the bargain. She possessed much charm of manner, plenty of "go" and originality, but she would never have had enough of this last-named quality to conceive the triple matrimonial alliance that Bonaparte had suggested to her. At first she gazed at him in speechless astonishment, and then, seized with an uncontrollable fit of merriment, burst out laughing in his face. Bonaparte was hurt, and with reason. Seeing this, Madame Permon made a supreme effort to compose her countenance and did her best to give her serious consideration to a plan which seemed to merit it so little. But Bonaparte told her that he meant what he said, and that as for a woman's age, it was a matter of absolute indifference to him how old she was so far as matrimony was concerned if, like her, she did not look more than thirty. He had, he went on, thought the matter out thoroughly, and he begged her to do the same. However, nothing could induce Madame Permon to alter her decision, which, after all, was a particularly sensible one.

It was apparently after the miscarriage of his plans in this direction that Bonaparte is said to have accepted the proposal, made to him by Barras, that he should marry the aged Mademoiselle Montansier, *directrice* of the Théâtre du Palais Royal.

We must not without due enquiry dismiss as apocry-

phal the story of this preposterous matrimonial project. In studying a man we must, as we have said before, always regard him in strict connexion with the morals of his period and, in the case of Bonaparte in particular, with those of his native country. Now, at the time of which we are speaking, these unequal unions were quite an everyday occurrence, especially in Corsica. In that country it was no less common for mere youths to unite themselves with women of mature age than for old men to marry quite young girls. A marriage with an elderly woman would therefore have provoked none of the hostile comment that would attend such a union nowadays. Besides, the low standard of morality with which the Abbé Prévost credited his hero the Chevalier des Grieux, and which was ordinarily characteristic of the young men of his day, did not die out with the Monarchy. Since the Revolution it had flaunted itself abroad more shamelessly than ever, and under the Empire it was by no means destined to disappear.[1]

[1] "In spite of '89 and its proximity, the Empire witnessed the reappearance of those *chevaliers à la mode* (whose prototype Dancourt presented on the stage in October 1787), *men who begin life with serious intentions but who afterwards give themselves up to frivolity*, receiving from a *Madame Patin* 1000 *pistoles* and from a *Baronne a splendid carriage and pair, a coachman and a magnificent spaniel.*

"In his young days my friend Rosman used to frequent the dinners and punch-parties of certain literary people, and he told me that one of the wittiest of our comic-opera librettists, who died after 1830, came to him one day during the Empire to tell him some news—good news he called it. 'Well,' says he, 'I am going to say good-bye to my old lady-love. My latest success has driven a woman simply mad about me, so down I come from the third floor to the first, and she's going to give me a cabriolet.' And when the worthy Rosman made a rather wry face at this unedifying announcement, our author went on: 'But my dear fellow, it's simply what these other gentlemen do for a living.' That

However that may be, it was Barras himself, if we are to believe his *Mémoires*, who introduced Bonaparte to Mademoiselle Montansier with a view to his making her a proposal of marriage. Mademoiselle Montansier, who for many years had enjoyed a renown in the annals of gallantry which was at least the equal of her histrionic fame, was very far from juvenile. It may excite a smile, but Barras states positively that "she could not have been less than seventy." He thought it necessary, however, perhaps because it was true, to repudiate the assertion that he had ever had any *liaison* with her. Fleury, of the Comédie-Française, affirms that Barras was reputed to have been one of the lovers of this aged *comédienne*, who, despite her seventy summers, despite too her life of ceaseless dissipation, "was unafflicted by any of the infirmities of old age; she retained her gaiety unimpaired, and possessed, unhappily for her, a heart and mind that were perennially young."[1] What perhaps constituted

was the sort of morality that was current in society from the top to the bottom, and more than one well-known actor and adventurer who had made his mark, had a *Madame Patin* or a *Baronne* or someone still higher up in the scale for his banker.

"A certain person who had made money in various ways in the time of the Directory and the early years of the Empire, had a son who had run into debt and who confessed to him that his liabilities amounted to a hundred thousand francs. 'How did you manage to spend a hundred thousand francs?' enquired his astonished parent. 'My dear father,' replied the young hopeful, 'with a cabriolet to keep up and mistresses to maintain, a hundred thousand francs soon goes.' 'What! mistresses? Do you mean to tell me that you have ruined yourself for mistresses at your age? Why, when I was young it was our mistresses who used to pay for *our* cabriolets and ruin themselves for *us*'" (*Mémoires d'un bourgeois de Paris*, Vol. I, pp. 131-3).

It is therefore not so astonishing that young men who contemplated matrimony should put the money question before everything else.

[1] Fleury, de la Comédie-Française, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, pp. 66-9.

a still more seductive charm was that if La Montansier had been careless of her virtue she had been most careful of her money, for, though ruined by the Revolution, she still had 1,200,000 francs to her credit.

Although there was not the least particle of love in the whole affair, it was necessary to make allusion to it, since the incident has been widely mentioned.

It was about this time, if reliance can be placed on Madame Elliot, or rather on the editor of her unfinished Memoirs, that Bonaparte asked this beautiful and charming Englishwoman to marry him.

Madame Elliot, *née* Grace Dalrymple, was one of the prettiest women of her day and one of its greatest coquettes, but what differentiated her from most others of her class was that her relations with men were always redeemed from vulgarity by a certain high-minded ambition.

She was the mistress successively of the Prince of Wales and Philippe Égalité Duc d'Orléans, by the former of whom she had had a daughter. During the Terror she had been shut up in the prison of Les Carmes, and it would seem as though a singular fatality had brought together as captives within the walls of this erstwhile convent three of the women, Madame Elliot, Madame Beauharnais and Madame Tallien, who succeeded in attracting for a time the attentions of that fickle gallant, Napoleon. The editor of Madame Elliot's memoirs writes in the following terms: "Madame Dalrymple Elliot never wearied of recounting about the man who was destined to make the world resound with his triumphs, numberless stories of his less conspicuous days. She had even

received a proposal of marriage from him and refused it."[1]

It is unfortunate that there is not more detailed information available on this point for, if there is any truth in the story, it is noteworthy that Napoleon, who was always strongly prejudiced against divorced people, overcame his aversion when paying his attentions to this Englishwoman, who was herself a *divorcée*. If only she had been no more than that!

We may also note the weakness which he ever displayed for women of irregular life. Like all other men who are the dupes of their feelings and hoodwinked by women accomplished in the art of exploiting them for their own ends, Napoleon was for ever wanting to marry the first woman he encountered whose reputed rank and fortune would be likely to help him on in the world, and who sufficiently encouraged him to hope that his wooing would not be in vain.

The events of the 13th Vendémiaire rescued Bonaparte from the obscurity and straitened circumstances in which he had dwelt hitherto, and henceforth he was to be met with in the most brilliant circles in Paris, where he became a centre of attraction. He was to be seen at the house of Barras, where the society was as mixed as it could possibly be, but where one came in contact with the leaders of politics and finance fawned upon by those courtesans, Madame Tallien, Madame Mailly de Châteaurenault, Madame Beauharnais and the rest. It is with these ladies that he liked best to converse. Did he not moreover owe a

[1] Madame Elliot, *Mémoires*, p. 215.



GRACE DALRYMPLE ELLIOT
From a mezzotint by John Dean after a painting by Gainsborough

debt of gratitude to the Citoyenne Tallien? He had not forgotten how he had come back after campaigning with the Army of the Alps with his only uniform much the worse for wear, and how Madame Tallien had used her good offices in procuring some material from the Government stores to provide him with a new one.[1]

But gratitude, where a beautiful woman is concerned, swiftly takes on the colours of a deeper feeling. Madame Tallien, "then the queen of fashion, had been struck by the General's expression,"[2] and had invited him to La Chaumière, her house in the Cours-la-Reine at the corner of the Allée des Veuves. Let us hear what one of the ladies who frequented the soirées of the fair Citoyenne de Thermidor has to tell us.

"At Madame Tallien's that evening the guests included the ex-Vicomtesse de Beauharnais, whose Creole beauty was as alluring as ever, losing nothing even by comparison with the brilliant attractions of Madame de Châteaurenault and Madame de Cambys, who were both conspicuous for the voluptuous contour of their figures and their splendid complexions.

"These three women were all robed in Grecian costume, but with less attention to detail, less meticulous refinement than Madame Tallien, and they resembled those confidantes that one sees upon the tragic stage attached to the person of some young and ill-fated princess. Bonaparte confined his attention to the principal figure in the drama. Dazzled at the thought of all the advantages that were united in this beautiful being whom France hailed as her deliverer, he conceived her as animated by similar ambitions to

[1] See Ouvrard, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 21.

[2] Stendhal, *Vie de Napoléon*, p. 75. (A woman's note on Napoleon.)

his own, and calculated all that might accrue to her for the advancement of her political power and her own personal glory from a position without parallel in the nation's history. He saw in imagination a splendid future opening out before her, and seemed even then to behold a royal diadem gilding the brow of her to whom the people of France were already bound by ties of love and gratitude."[1]

These are fine words that Madame Sophie Gay employs, but they are scarcely borne out by the facts. She credits Bonaparte with ideas which he did not then possess, for we must not lose sight of the fact that at the date in question he visited Madame Tallien rather in the quality of a needy suppliant than in that of an avowed admirer of her beauty and success. After Vendémiaire a change was to come over the situation.

Another witness who, since he was one of Madame Tallien's lovers, deserves credence, to wit the financier and contractor Ouvrard, has written as follows:—

"It was shortly before the 13th Vendémiaire that Bonaparte was introduced at Madame Tallien's. He was perhaps the least conspicuous, the least favoured by Fortune of all the people who composed her salon. It often happened that in the midst of the most animated discussions people would go off into little groups where they forgot in light and careless converse the grave matters that but too often oppressed their thoughts. Bonaparte rarely joined them, but when he did so he displayed an *abandon* and a light-heartedness full of sparkle and wit. One evening, he adopted the tone and mannerisms of a fortune-teller, and seizing Madame Tallien's hand began to deliver himself of all sorts of extravagances."[2]

[1] Madame Sophie Gay, *Salons célèbres.*

[2] Ouvrard, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 20.

It was Bonaparte's object to conciliate by his affability the good offices of the Citoyenne Tallien. She was so beautiful, and he so ready to love her! And yet what a contrast between them! He, of low stature, thin, hollow-eyed, his sallow skin drawn tight like parchment across his temples, his hair long and ill-powdered, just, in a word, as we know him in Guerin's splendid portrait. She, tall, of brilliant complexion, overflowing with that happiness which in a woman is a second dower of beauty, and tended from head to foot with all the care and all the art that mark the consummate coquette. "Her sole head-dress," says the Duchesse d'Abrantès, one of her adorers, "was her own splendid black hair plaited around the head, not hanging down at all,[1] but simply plaited in antique fashion as in the busts in the Vatican. It was a style which admirably became her regular, classic type of beauty, setting off like a framework of ebony the gleaming ivory of her perfect neck and lovely features which, though without apparent colour, were of a whiteness instinct with life and warmth—a veritable complexion of Cadiz. Her only adornment was a long ample robe of muslin falling in large folds about her limbs, and modelled after the drapery of a Grecian statue. Only, the robe was of choice Indian muslin and fashioned, no doubt, more elegantly than those of Aspasia or Poppæa. It was caught up at the bosom, and the sleeves were drawn back over the arms and fastened with old-fashioned cameo brooches. Similar

[1] The good Duchess forgets that for her beautiful hair Madame Tallien was always indebted to her wigs, of which she possessed thirty, in varying shades.

cameos adorned her shoulders and her waist. She wore no gloves, but on one of her arms—arms which might have served as a model for Canova's finest statue—she wore a serpent of gold enamelled with black, the head of which was composed of a superb emerald carved in the form of a reptile's head. She also wore a magnificent shawl of cashmere, a luxury then very rare in France, the folds of which she would draw around her with inimitable grace and infinite coquetry, for the crimson and purple hues of the Indian stuff intensified the gleaming whiteness of her arms and shoulders. When she smiled, and she smiled most graciously, in acknowledgment of the many bows that were made her, she displayed two rows of glittering pearls that must have made many a woman jealous."[1]

All this must have caused many a man to fall in love with her, and Bonaparte lost his heart to her like the rest; more thoroughly indeed than the rest, not only, as has been said, because he was indebted to her for his "culottes," but because she was beautiful, and, still more perhaps, because she was powerful. For her power could have scarcely had any but an attractive effect on a man whose own bosom was a cauldron seething with all the feverish desires of ambition and power remorselessly repressed by poverty.

The most natural explanation of Bonaparte's love for Madame Tallien is to be found in her beauty. It is worthy of note that he paid his court to two of Barras' mistresses, not including la Montansier, who, of course, would make the third. But all that was perfectly in the nature of things. A man only becomes

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*

fond of the women he meets often. In the course of his frequent visits to Barras he met Madame Tallien and Madame de Beauharnais, the two pre-eminent beauties of the world of pleasure which composed the court of this "King of Shreds and Patches," this "Barrack-room Alcibiades," who lorded it in the Luxembourg. Seeing that the women of this circle were the only ones with whom he mixed, it was quite natural that Napoleon should fall in love with them, and as the most beautiful was the Citoyenne Tallien and in all respects the most in evidence, it was she who first set his heart on fire. If he had been a shopman, he would have fallen in love with a shop-girl; had he hung about the housekeeper's lodge he would have lost his head over a *portière*. It is but a natural example of cause and effect, just as a match catches fire from the first thing it is rubbed against, the only difference being that while the match is a passive object, a man has the power to choose. Nevertheless, he thinks he is exercising his choice when, more often than not, he is just as little of a free agent as the match. Such, however, was not the case with Bonaparte in this instance.

He therefore proffered his most respectful allegiance to "Notre Dame de Thermidor," as she was then called. Ere long he ventured to declare his love, telling her it was unconquerable. How the fair citoyenne must have smiled to see this thin pale-faced little creature raising his aspirations to her level! Still, it is scarcely probable that she received his advances with the disdain that Barras alleges. She had too much kindness and too much good taste in her composition ever to

wound the feelings of a man whose sole offence was to deem her beautiful and to tell her so. Was it ever her way to be annoyed with things like that? "She did not hesitate," writes the Director, "to tell him with scorn that she thought she might do better than that."[1] But surely Madame Tallien would have been the last person to talk in that strain; it is the kind of speech that one would much more readily associate with a mere heartless wanton than with a *demi-mondaine* of her stamp, and if the latter title suits her the former is not altogether equally appropriate. Besides that, there is too much fatuous stupidity, too much egregious self-sufficiency about the words to permit of their being ascribed to any other author than the ci-devant Vicomte de Barras himself.

Nor is there a grain of truth in the statement that Bonaparte nourished any ill-feeling against Madame Tallien for having rejected his attentions. Madame Sophie Gay, however, declares that such was the case. "Napoleon," she says, "never forgave her for failing to bring to pass the dream which only his genius was capable of conceiving, and he abandoned her as soon as he perceived that she lacked the ambition, and perhaps the ability, to fulfil the lofty destiny that Heaven offered her, and that she was content to seek a no more illustrious title than that of 'Notre Dame de Thermidor.'"[2]

But all that is the merest moonshine. The truth is that Bonaparte forgave her, and with alacrity. He never forgot that it was to her influence with Barras

[1] Barras, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 58.
[2] Madame Sophie Gay, *Salons célèbres.*



MADAME FAUTIEN

and Tallien that he owed his command on the 13th Vendémiaire. When, later on, he became leader of the army in Italy, he wrote to Barras, saying, "Give Mesdames Tallien and Châteaurenault a little kiss for me, the former on the lips and the latter on the cheek."[1] Would he have written thus if he had nourished any ill-will towards her? When in after years he set about cleaning out that Augean stable, his wife's salon; when he turned out of his house all the *émigrés'* grass-widows, all the women who had been divorced five or six times over, the Citoyenne Hamelin and the Citoyenne Tallien among the rest, it was because he wished that the salon of the Chief Magistrate of the Republic, of the First Consul, in a word, his own salon, should open its doors to no women but such as were clean-living and of good report. Citoyenne Tallien, therefore, who had lived under the protection of Barras and of Ouvrard, was not, any more than the others, to be granted exceptional treatment at his hands, and it was in vain that her friend Josephine interceded for her with tears and supplications. One exception he did make, and that was in favour of his own wife. Did he act wisely?

Refused by Madame Tallien, Bonaparte hazards no more overtures to women; he waits for the women to make advances to him, a plan which, whatever advantages it may offer on the score of convenience, is unquestionably lacking in wisdom. A woman requires to be endowed with no slight measure of effrontery to throw herself at a man's head. A man almost always

[1] Letter from Bonaparte to Barras, *quartier-général de Nice, le* 10 *germinal, an IV* (unpublished).

capitulates before the attack, only, however, to find that there is no surer way of becoming the dupe and the prey of a scheming adventuress.

The truth of this was soon to be brought home to the General by bitter experience. Among the women whom he saw most frequently was a friend of Madame Tallien, and, like her, one of Barras' mistresses. He had met her often at fêtes both at the Luxembourg and at La Chaumière. This was the widow of General Beauharnais, who had met his doom on the scaffold in the preceding year. She herself had been imprisoned in Les Carmes, and there it was that she made the acquaintance of Madame Tallien. A close friendship sprang up between the two women which continued after their release from prison. A curious fact, and one which throws a powerful light on the moral disruption of the period, is that their amicable relations were in no degree disturbed by the circumstance that they were carrying on a simultaneous intrigue with the Pacha of the Luxembourg.

Bonaparte, whose aim it was to amuse himself without prejudice to his duties and his interests, had entered on a liaison with the Veuve Beauharnais. It was the sort of connexion that could be terminated at any time, and to take for one's own the mistress of an important personage, and a woman of title into the bargain, is always flattering to a young man's vanity. More than this, she was a woman who might be useful to him socially. She was, to be sure, scarcely a paragon of virtue, he knew that as well as anybody, but what he was not so fully aware of and what he did not learn till much later, was that she had a very fair knowledge of

the ways of the world. Though wholly devoid of any sense of right and wrong she was gifted with some very serviceable notions about getting through life. She was on the look-out for a protector, for Barras seemed to be getting tired of her, and if a willing swain should come her way and be simpleton enough to take her, well, she would be a good-natured, easy creature and offer no very strenuous opposition to the arrangement.

Matrimony indeed was her object, but the only qualities she demanded in the bridegroom were sufficient funds to pay off her old debts, and sufficient credit to enable her to incur fresh ones.

The General turned out to be precisely the willing individual for whom she was looking. As for him, he set to work to play the part of the assiduous lover when—and he ought to have foreseen it—he found himself caught in the trap. If the head is usually the dupe of the heart, the heart is occasionally the dupe of the head. As far as love-affairs were concerned, the General still retained the illusions of his adolescence. By dint of repeatedly telling Madame de Beauharnais that he loved her, he discovered all sorts of unsuspected virtues in her, and ended by falling in love with her in real earnest.

He himself had said: "One must feel respect for a woman in order to love her really and completely." Did he then feel any respect for the cast-off mistress of Barras, Hoche and all the rest? It is possible, so blind is love and so prolific of sophistries. And that, too, Bonaparte knew unless he acquired the knowledge subsequently, for, reading a lecture to his brother

Lucien one day, he said: "To talk, above all to argue, one must possess reason, and a man in love has none, even if he had any before he fell in love."[1]

But a man never reasons half so well as when he has himself been caught in the trap, and a veritable trap it was that was laid for him by this professional coquette. Was she clever then? Not in the slightest. Marriage was her one absorbing preoccupation. Her moral qualities then? Morality never entered into the question. Well then, her fortune? Alas, her only contribution to the partnership was her debts and, as they say, her virtues, and that was precious little. And all the time her love for Bonaparte, which many have been pleased to pretend was as pure as ether, was nothing more than "sterling" affection, as Grace Dalrymple Elliot—who knew a great deal about that sort of attachment—would have put it in her humorous way. The proof, moreover, was that after Bonaparte had been subjected to the most exacting apprenticeship, and had become her titular husband, she told this very Madame Elliot that "she had no affection for him."[2] Not content with making this *viva voce* declaration, she renews it in writing to another of her friends. ". . . Do you love him? you are going to ask me. Well . . . no. You have a dislike for him? No, it is merely a kind of indifference, the state of mind which in matters of faith religious people find more disquieting than any other."[3]

[1] Th. Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 278.
[2] Madame Elliot, *Mémoires*, p. 216.
[3] One of Josephine's letters. De Coston, *Premières années de Napoléon*, Vol. II, p. 347.

When he perceived how fickle and frivolous she was, and therefore how incapable of true affection, Bonaparte might have repeated to himself Horace Walpole's words about Madame de Fleury: "She is very entertaining at supper, but what do they make of it at home?" But no such thought occurred to him, for was it not precisely by means of her faults that the courtesan had laid him under her spell? All the while she appeared to him as the most ethereal being that was ever heard of, such a wife as is not given to man—though he possessed her, he and many others besides. Looking upon her with a lover's eyes he believed himself beloved. One sighs to think what a past master he was in the art of war, but what a hopeless tyro in the art of love. He knew not (and we are not the first to discover this truth) that love, true love, exists subjectively in the mind of the lover, and that the woman who is the recipient of this love plays but the smallest part in the matter, and that one is happier by the ideas one brings to bear on the object of the affections than by the qualities that one finds in that object—when one finds anything at all.

How salutary it had been for him had he remembered and pondered on those lines of J. B. Rousseau:—

> Insensé qui sur tes promesses
> Croit pouvoir fonder un appui,
> Sans songer que mêmes tendresses,
> Mêmes serments, mêmes caresses,
> Trompèrent un autre avant lui!

But were lovers ever given to philosophising? Well it is for them that they are not, for reason gives short

shrift to love. Philosophy and reason always come sooner or later, but they only come when it is too late to go back upon the past.

Well, the upshot of it all was that Josephine had gone about her ignoble work, spreading her snares; Hoche, Barras and the others had not allowed themselves to be trapped, but the young Corsican, more inexpert, had fallen a victim to her wiles.

So at last Bonaparte is married. Behold him in the seventh heaven of delight! He has his Josephine now, she is his for ever, she of whom it has been said that she

Passa de lit en lit au rang d'impératrice.

But now he tears himself from her embrace—without perceiving that she makes no very strenuous effort to retain him—to assume the command of the army in Italy.

The question as to whether a marriage turns out well or ill, and whether happiness or misery dwells in the home, depends for its solution always on the wife. Signs are not wanting to make Bonaparte fear that his love is not wholly requited. He is apprehensive of unfaithfulness, although it seems rather early in the day to get so shabby a notion of the object of his affections. To preclude all sinister possibilities, he asks his wife to come to him in Italy, but she—great doll that she is—prefers to amuse herself in Paris. Then jealousy begins to gnaw at his vitals and off he writes to Carnot: "I am in despair. My wife will not come to me; she has some lover who is keeping her in Paris. Cursed be the whole sex." His special curse

lights on her whom he adores because perhaps he believes what he says to Carnot. But lo! She is on the way; she has come. His curses are forgotten and now he is on his knees before her. War calls him hence and away he goes. But the gigantic tasks which he has to perform do not prevent him from finding time to write to her. And such letters! Simply burning with passion. They may be summed up in the well-known line:—

C'est moi qui te dois tout, puisque c'est moi qui t'aime!

Nevertheless, Napoleon is not one of the great lovers. He loved his first wife with all the force of the word. His letters to her overflow with feeling, or rather, with frenzy. But then where is the young man who has not addressed similar declarations to his mistress? The stage on which Bonaparte was already playing the most conspicuous rôle, the wars which he carried on with the same fiery energy that he imported into his love affairs—wars from which he derived as many pleasures and far fewer disappointments—all this framework, all this background, throw up vividly his dramatic monologue of love. Take away the framework, take away the exceptional stage effects which he knows how to use to their fullest advantage—as, for instance, when he says, "Wurmser shall pay dearly for the tears he causes you"—and there will only remain the love of a young man, inexperienced in the hearts of women—ardent, passionate and forceful, heightened by the living colours of a Corsican imagination, but, after all, not so difficult to match.

To place these letters on an equality with those

of Mirabeau or of Saint-Preux in Rousseau's *Julie* is to praise them more highly than they deserve. Perhaps those critics who would claim this high distinction for them have been content to accept Madame de Rémusat's appreciation without troubling to read the letters themselves. "I have seen some of the letters," she says, "which Napoleon wrote to Josephine at the time of the first campaign in Italy. There reigns in them a tone so passionate, one finds in them feelings so strong, expressions so full of life and withal so poetic, a love so apart from all others that there is not a woman but would have been proud to receive letters such as these."[1] Such a woman did exist however, and that woman was Josephine. But he never guessed it. While he was despoiling Italy of its laurels, she, many years his senior, was deceiving and betraying him—the man of whom all Europe was speaking with wonder and admiration. And for what sort of creature was she betraying him? For a kind of Merry-Andrew masquerading in the guise of a light infantry officer. It must be granted that if Bonaparte was an extraordinary man, Josephine was a still more extraordinary woman.

When the General is told of her treachery he curses anew his adorable spouse. Suddenly darkness reigns in his heart, love and the light of heaven are withdrawn from his sight. There is no incense in the temple, no music in the sanctuary, no soft voices in the air; nought save night, silence and despair. At last the bandage has fallen from his eyes. How cruel is the first heartbroken cry of anguish that rises

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 46.

to those lips which know so well how to give the word of command that will lead his soldiers on to victory! How bitter the first tears that fall from those eyes which, with the keenness of the eagle's glance, detect in their smallest details the plans of the opposing generals, the marches and counter-marches of hostile armies, and the points where they are most open to attack, but which are blind, absolutely and pathetically blind, to the vulgar manœuvres of a sordid coquette. The unhappy man experienced such a shock from the blow that his heart was for ever broken. He afterwards attempted, more than once, to gather up the fragments and piece them together for what they were worth; he even deluded himself in later years with the idea that he had made himself a new heart, but he was never destined to attain to that intensity of feeling which he experienced in Italy. Everything that follows a first love is nothing but love's counterfeit. Meanwhile it was with a heart wounded almost to death that he began to see clearly into his adventure and to distinguish the various threads of the spider's web that Josephine had woven round him, and in which, poor doting dupe, he had allowed himself to be entangled like the veriest fool alive.

One can hardly help feeling a pang of sorrow in the presence of such tremendous grief as this, for it is genuine; genuine as the love of which nothing now remains but the ruins, and which will pass away altogether ere long and leave not a wrack behind. *Etiam periere ruinæ!* The unhappy husband thought he must die, but he soon perceived that even suffering such as this does not bring death in its train. He had driven away his wife's lover but she found others to take

the vacant place. These also he sent packing,[1] and for the time Josephine behaved herself comparatively well. But during the campaign in Egypt a further return to the forbidden fruit follows her latest return to virtue. Napoleon gets to know all, comes back to France, and by a timely divorce is on the point of sending back this frail plaything into the obscurity from which she ought never to have emerged. But again he lets himself be talked over. Political events league themselves with the dictates of his heart to make him give way. How could he enter upon such a heart-sickening business confronted as he was by the problems of a revolution? How could he be expected to face simultaneously a divorce and an 18 Brumaire. Like a wise man he makes sure of his position first, for he knows full well that he may get rid of his wife whenever he pleases. And until the hour arrives for the final separation, he appoints certain attendants—"dames pour accompagner" they are called—to be with Josephine and to act as watch-dogs, as it were, of her virtue. Like a prisoner between four bayonets she is now compelled to walk straight, no more turning aside or transgressing the marriage bond. Etiquette, which has its uses, does not allow it. And so, until the day of her divorce, Josephine is obliged to be faithful, in the letter if not in the spirit, to her lord and master.

But will *he* remain faithful to her? That is another matter. It is beyond doubt that he did so all through

[1] "In the course of his first campaigns in Italy he dismissed from his staff many of Josephine's lovers" (Notes de Sismondi, *Revue historique*, Vol. IX, p. 363).

the campaign in Italy. The deep exclusive love he had for his wife withheld him from entering into the distractions and pleasures which were offered to him on every side. While the officers and men of the army in Italy gave themselves heart and soul to amusement, while the fair ones of Italy did everything in their power to afford them solace and repose after the fatigues of campaigning, "the commander-in-chief was perhaps the only man who appeared indifferent to pleasure."[1] Nevertheless, temptation of the most alluring character was not wanting. Everyone in the army knew that the incomparable Madame Grassini, whose singing in the opera *Vierges du Soleil* was applauded to the echo every night at La Scala, had conceived a passion for the General as violent as it was fruitless, and it may be that the wild ovations which nightly greeted her performance were intended to console her for her disappointments in love.

Madame Grassini was then at the very zenith of her beauty, the beauty which was the universal topic of conversation; and Heaven knows what a host of handsome and attractive women there were at that time in Milan. But Madame Grassini possessed not only beauty, but kind-heartedness as well, that quality which sets the seal on beauty by investing it with a sort of heavenly aureole, bidding love follow in the wake of admiration.

In Milan she was a favourite everywhere. Everyone welcomed and made much of her; so gentle was she, so natural, so original too! The French officers were head over ears in love with her. They were

[1] Stendhal, *Vie de Napoléon*, p. 174.

more especially enraptured by her way of talking. She spoke a mixture of French and Italian peculiar to herself, which she lisped at one with an inconceivable charm. Under cover of this *patois* she used to deliver herself of the most startling utterances without any hesitation whatever. So startling indeed were some of her remarks that people would look at each other in amazement, doubtful whether they ought to appear to understand her or not. When she perceived the effect she had made she would beg forgiveness like a penitent child, laying the blame on her ignorance of the language, and such an amusing air of bewildered astonishment would she put on, that everyone had to laugh. Then the whole performance would be gone through again. Further transgressions, further protestations of innocence—and the end of it all was that everybody raved about her.

Ambition sometimes leads to love, and love—whether in the case of a man or a woman—which has its origin in ambition is that which engenders the loftiest feelings. Lovely and brilliantly gifted as she was, Madame Grassini doubtless deemed that she was worthy of something higher than the homage paid her on every hand by the French officers; she aspired to that of the Commander-in-Chief himself. But how was she to reveal to him her heart's desire? Doubtless love, which is so inventive, found a way. But to all her advances Bonaparte remained impassive. Later on at St. Helena he stated that his attitude was dictated by policy.

"I was too strong-minded," he said, "to let myself fall into the snare. Beneath the flowers I gauged the precipice. My position was most delicate. I had

under me generals much older than myself; my task was an enormous one and everything I did was jealously watched by all—my circumspection was extreme. My success or failure depended on my behaviour. I might have let my caution slumber for one brief hour —and how many of my victories have depended on no longer time than that."[1]

It is possible that it was from motives of policy that in those happy days in Italy Bonaparte preserved an absolute chastity or rather an inviolable fidelity towards his wife. Inasmuch, however, as the Memorial was dictated with the object of bequeathing to posterity the view of events as Napoleon wished them to be recorded rather than as they actually occurred, we may be permitted to doubt his allegations. Bonaparte admits that it was no high moral principle that put the curb on his passions or his weaknesses; he affirms that it was a matter of policy. Policy perhaps had something to do with it, but as a matter of fact the real cause of his victorious resistance to all the women who beset him with the temptation of Saint Anthony was far less meritorious than he would have us believe. He was in love, madly in love with Josephine, had eyes and thoughts for none but her; all other women, therefore, were, so far as he was concerned, non-existent. But later on it occurred to him to claim the credit for having exercised control over himself and for having given way to no woman's blandishments. Thus he appears to posterity as a being so immeasurably superior to ordinary men that he is regarded almost in the light of a god.

[1] *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, Vol. III, p. 41.

Upon the ruins of his passionate love for his wife Bonaparte resignedly reared an edifice of gentle, steady affection for her which became a sort of second nature with him, an affection which never diminished, notwithstanding his many infidelities. Bonaparte himself observed rather cynically "that he always had to come back to her. Indeed, he made no effort to conceal that this return was less the result of any deep attachment than of circumstances which rendered it convenient to him."[1] It was like Jupiter, who after manifold breaches of the connubial bond always came back to his Juno.

[1] Chaptal, *Mes souvenirs sur Napoléon*, p. 351.

CHAPTER III

Madame Visconti makes advances to General Bonaparte, who repels them — Bonaparte's charm — The General in a *loge grillée* at the Théâtre Feydeau—Bonaparte and the women of Cairo—Madame Fourès—An invitation to dinner at General Dupuy's—Bonaparte's gross behaviour towards Madame Fourès — The latter is by no means offended—Bellilotte's story—How she came to marry Fourès—The lieutenant's wanderings—Taken prisoner by the English—The English commodore plays Bonaparte a shabby trick—Conjugal troubles and a divorce—The fair Pauline becomes Bonaparte's dutiful mistress — Bonaparte's *naïveté* regarding women—His affection for Bellilotte — Bonaparte gets her married—Echoes from the banks of the Nile—Character of Madame Fourès.

MADAME GRASSINI was not the only one of her sex who laid siege to the affections of Bonaparte in Italy. One of the most popular and beautiful women in Milan returned again and again to the charge, but with no greater success than the famous prima donna. This was none other than the renowned Madame Visconti, who owes her fame to two causes. The one was her beauty, which withstood the ravages of time for well-nigh half a century; the other, her *liaison* with General Berthier. This connexion, despite her own numerous aberrations from the path of fidelity, despite too the conspicuous rôle which, under the Empire, her lover was called upon to fulfil, endured unshaken, even surviving the marriage which the General contracted, as Prince of Neufchâtel and Wagram, with a

princess of the Royal House of Bavaria. Madame Visconti was the widow of the Count Sopranzi. In due course she had married again, her second husband being Monsieur Visconti, a diplomatist of note. After a while, however, they separated and went their several ways. Like Madame Grassini, she was in the habit of seasoning her conversation with remarks of decidedly daring character, occasionally, indeed, they merited a severer qualification. But no one took exception. So charmingly in fact did she lisp her little improprieties in pretty broken phrases, that people would have been very loth to have her talk otherwise. At all events, none of the French officers who composed her "staff" ever thought of complaining—she was so irresistibly pretty.

Like Madame Grassini, too, Madame Visconti set her cap at Bonaparte but, like her, she found that her efforts were expended to no purpose. To begin with, the General loved his Josephine, and this prevented him from sipping the honey from other flowers. But besides that, he was scarcely such a simpleton as to imagine that these women were making love to him merely for his "beaux yeux," as the saying goes. If Bonaparte had been but a captain would she have paid him the slightest attention? There were plenty of officers in the Army of Italy who were far superior in point of looks to the Commander-in-Chief, but this star of the stage had had her imagination kindled by the halo of glory which encompassed him. Fleeting and illusory as the event proved them to be, she had feelings which she genuinely mistook for the symptoms of a deep and lasting attachment. But what Madame

Visconti's desire really amounted to was to attain the distinction of being singled out by the man on whom all eyes were fixed—the central figure, the protagonist of the great European drama. She longed to link her destiny with his by means of some union of a more or less enduring character. It might be taken for granted that a man of Bonaparte's age who had made such a brilliant début on the world's stage would not be content to rest on his laurels. The loftiest destiny was within his grasp, and it was scarcely to be supposed that he would not reach out his hand to seize it. What a magnificent future then was in store for the woman, whether wife or mistress, whom he should call upon to share the glory and splendour of a career which bid fair to shine unrivalled in the history of the world.

These were fine dreams of Madame Visconti, but Bonaparte declined to take a hand in bringing them to pass. Lovely as she was, nobly as she bore herself, royal as was her mien, with her brows crowned *à la* Titian with masses of jet-black hair, the Commander-in-Chief would have none of her. And so, repulsed in the highest quarters, she declined on a lesser luminary, the General whose official rank placed him next to the Generalissimo. This was Berthier, the second in command. More tractable than his chief, he inclined his ear to her blandishments, and his liaison with Madame Visconti, which Napoleon used to call "Berthier's folly," endured until his death as Prince of Neufchâtel and Wagram.

During this campaign in Italy, "in those happy far-off days, Bonaparte exhibited a charm that none could

gainsay."[1] It was love which imparted an ethereal quality to his genius and gave him that charm to which Marmont, his aide-de-camp, refers. But the Duchesse d'Abrantès, though recognising the reality of Napoleon's love for Josephine, affirms that she saw his affections still more deeply engaged elsewhere. She does not disclose the name of the mysterious inamorata to whom she alludes, nor does she supply us with sufficient data to allow us to hazard a conjecture. The following is her story. "At this time (on his return from Italy) Bonaparte was as fond of his wife as his particular disposition and the gigantic tasks which he had assumed, and to which he devoted all the energies of his intellect, permitted him to be. Yes, there is no doubt that he *did* love Josephine. Nevertheless, people who state that he loved her more dearly than he loved any other woman are not acquainted with the details of his whole career. Many years ago, had they followed his movements, they might have seen him helpless in the turmoil of a headstrong and romantic passion. They might have beheld him blushing and growing pale by turns, quivering in every limb, and even shedding tears. There was a certain box fitted with a *grille* in the first tier at the old Théâtre Feydeau—11 was the number of it—that could have whispered many a pretty secret about the matter."[2]

Clearly Madame d'Abrantès was at least as well informed as the box at the Théâtre Feydeau, and it was scarcely fair of her to whet her readers' curiosity about

[1] Duc de Raguse, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 298.
[2] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 425.

so piquant an episode and then to smother it up in such mysterious silence. Surely she might have been kind enough to tell us what she knew about so passionate a love-passage. As it is, there is no possibility of determining who it was that Madame Junot had in mind.

Returning to Paris after his brilliant campaign in Italy, Bonaparte was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the left wing of the army against England, and devoted all his energies to fitting out his projected expedition to Egypt. He had no time to spare for the trivialities of love-making nor, as Madame de Rémusat tells us, did he at this time think of any other woman but his wife. Shortly before his departure, he gave orders to some theatrical agents to get together a numerous company of comedians whom he wished to take with him. And so they raised a regiment of actors of every description, including dancers, male and female, but more particularly female. Great was the enthusiasm, and everyone wanted to go. There was no one, not even the most insignificant chorus girl, who was not anxious to set sail for the land of Sesostris. The word went round that Bonaparte, having made history in Italy, was now bent on making love in Egypt. And love he did make, though that was not the object of his going.

When, however, the day of departure came round, there was not a solitary woman who could make up her mind to leave Paris, and with the exception of Bianca, the actress whom General Verdier had married in Italy, and a few officers' and employees' wives, no women connected with the stage accompanied the expedition.

The stories of Bonaparte's harem and Junot's seraglio which afforded so much entertainment to the readers of the *chronique galante* in the newspapers of Albion were pure invention. Certainly Bonaparte was not a model of faithfulness towards his wife, but to do him justice we must point out—not however as an excuse for his shortcomings—that Bonaparte's infidelities only date from the day on which he learned from the lips of Junot of his wife's behaviour at La Malmaison. It is indeed not too much to affirm that it was Josephine's misconduct which corrupted the morals of Bonaparte.

When he learnt that she had played him false again, there took place in Bonaparte's heart an upheaval similar to that which it had suffered in Italy. The few illusions which he had cherished concerning Josephine's love for him were finally swept away like autumn leaves before the blast. After giving vent to a violent outburst of passion, he settled down to consider the matter in all its bearings, and he came to the conclusion that the offenders were too far away for him to inflict on them the punishment they deserved. This time his love for Josephine suffered irremediable shipwreck—and this is the proof of it. When a man is really in love, as he was in Italy, he has no eyes and no desire save for the object of his affections. No other woman exists for him. Now we have it that "about the middle of September 1798, Bonaparte commanded to appear before him in the house of Elfy Bey half a dozen native women whose elegance and beauty he had heard spoken of in high terms; but the coarseness and obesity of their figures caused their instant dismissal."[1]

[1] Bourrienne, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 173.

Some of the other officers, however, appear to have put up with them, for we are told that "Othello was a natural son of Junot's, born to him when he was in Egypt by an Abyssinian slave named Xraxarane,"[1] whose complexion, though not of the duskiest, could not have been excessively fair, for Junot used to call her "Jaunette." It is pretty evident therefore that the chorus girls, who at the last moment were afraid to embark, were lamentably missed in Egypt.

However, to return to the story. It happened that Bonaparte, riding one day at the head of his staff *en route* for some sort of gathering or fête that was taking place in the neighbourhood of Cairo, encountered on the way several people riding on donkeys. It was a party of employees connected with the civil staff accompanied by some women whom they had brought with them from France. The caravan was returning from the fair, and peals of merry laughter rang out every moment from the rustic cavalcade. A laugh richer and of more silvery sweetness than the others caught the General's ear. He noticed that it proceeded from a mouth furnished with two charming rows of teeth just as white as they were small, and that this mouth lit up with its gaiety a particularly attractive countenance, very roguish, very arch and very devil-may-care, in a word, very French. He had a good look at her as he passed, and gave her a niche in his memory. He evidently mentioned the rencontre to General Berthier and caused him to make some discreet, or rather indiscreet, enquiries concerning the young woman. He was apparently anxious to

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 192.

judge for himself whether the teeth which he had noticed in passing were more beautiful than Josephine's (which were notoriously bad), for General Dupuy, formerly commander of the 32nd demi-brigade, received orders to give a dinner the very next day and to invite certain "dames de France," not omitting the wife of Citizen Fourès, lieutenant of the 22nd regiment of mounted infantry. This Madame Fourès was none other than the charming Frenchwoman of the white teeth and silvery laugh.

The next day, therefore, Madame Fourès received an invitation to dinner. Nothing was said about her husband, who, for all the part he was asked to play in the matter, might have been non-existent. In sending her this invitation they had committed a breach of etiquette. It was just as much an impropriety then as it would be to-day to invite a married woman to dinner without her husband. The Citoyenne Fourès ought to have declined the invitation, but there was a certain spice of mystery about the whole matter which, though it should have deterred any self-respecting woman from having anything to do with it, proved for this hare-brained little creature an irresistible attraction.

"Well, that's extremely odd," said the lieutenant; "why didn't they ask me, I wonder. It must be an oversight; the Colonel knows I'm married well enough, and the invitation must have come through the official channels. Don't you think I'd better go and say something about it?"

"Certainly not," answered Madame Fourès—who with true feminine instinct scented an adventure, and

guessed that her husband's presence was by no means desired—"certainly not. If you have not been invited it is because there is not enough room at the General's. Things you see are necessarily different here from what they are in France. Besides, what are you anxious about? Only old people will be at the dinner. Surely you're not going to be jealous about a thing like that?"

"No, I have every confidence in you, whom I have made my wife and to whom I have given an honourable position in life. However, since you want to go to this confounded dinner, impress on them that you have a husband and that they ought to have asked him too."

The dinner went off with all the gaiety possible, and it is probable that, in spite of her husband's absence, the pretty citoyenne was fully as light-hearted as the rest. They were just about to bring in the coffee when the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard outside followed by a great bustle and commotion in the house. A moment later the door was flung open and in came the Commander-in-Chief with two aides-de-camp at his heels.

General Dupuy expressed his thanks to the Commander-in-Chief for honouring him with a visit, and apologised for being so late at table, but, said he, "the ladies have been such excellent company!" He added that his happiness would be complete if the Commander-in-Chief would condescend to take a cup of coffee with them. Bonaparte accepted. All the time he was sipping his coffee he was silently regarding Madame Fourès, who did not fail to notice it. Per-

ceiving this, he riveted his gaze upon her with such marked persistence that she began to blush like a cherry. As soon as he had finished his coffee, Bonaparte rose and withdrew without addressing a single word to her.

Madame Fourès was seated at table between Generals Dupuy and Junot. The latter, who had not touched his coffee the whole time Bonaparte had been present, now wished to take some. In spite of the fact that he was steady-handed enough to shatter a pipe in a man's mouth at twenty paces with a pistol-shot, he took hold of his cup so clumsily that he spilled all its contents over his fair neighbour's dress. Profuse in his apologies, he caught up a table-napkin and hastened to wipe out the stain. As, however, the only result of his efforts was to make matters worse, Junot conducted Madame Fourès to a room upstairs, where General Bonaparte was waiting for her. She quitted it two hours later with another stain, which, though not so noticeable as the first, would never yield to soap and water.

Such an action on the General's part was outrageous in the highest degree. It was contrary to the wise ordinance of the Scriptures: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his ox, nor his ass. . . ." But his action must not be judged by present-day standards. Though these rough manners were then the mode in the army, Bonaparte with his immense genius is to be blamed for not showing himself above them. A century ago a soldier thought that everything became him. "It was vain to look for refinement or the fine flower of politeness in military men of those

days. Suppose you had been reading a newspaper in some public place, an officer might have come along and taken it out of your hands without a word. Again, if a queue had formed outside a theatre, military men would always push their way to the front and refuse to wait their turn. When once the heart of a woman had been overcome, the real nature of these swaggering Richelieus rapidly showed itself in its true colours. Their whole talk was of pitching the husbands out of window, and not infrequently they fell to beating the women."[1]

It would not appear, however, that these proceedings, cavalier as they were, mortally offended the wife of our cavalry officer. She allowed herself to be led astray as unprotestingly as the Biblical ass or ox might have done. The Scriptures, therefore, were not so far wrong as might at first appear in including the wife in such an unflattering category.

But it is high time that we gave the reader some further details regarding Madame Fourès. To begin with, she was a Southerner. Her maiden name was Bellisle — Pauline Bellisle — and her birthplace Carcassonne. She could claim no family connexions. Her mother, a *femme-de-chambre* or cook or something of the kind, had been brought to bed of her by a man who, to quote Madame d'Abrantès' expression, was "comme il faut." One can therefore imagine what a makeshift education the poor child had received. Uniting in herself the dispositions of her parents, her longings centred rather on luxury and expensive living than on virtue and high thinking; nor were

[1] Véron, *Mémoires d'un bourgeois de Paris*, Vol. I, pp. 127-9.

there any external influences at hand to counteract the maternal blemish.

Her education, then, was that of an *ouvrière*, and no great stress seems to have been laid on the moral side of it. She knew the three R's. She was rather pretty, one of her admirers even going so far as to describe her as "a charming creature with great blue eyes surmounted by eyebrows as black as ebony, which formed a striking contrast to her magnificent head of 'blond-cendré' hair, of which she had sufficient to envelop her whole body."[1] As a matter of fact, she had nothing more than what is called "la beauté du diable," and the writer of these words must have allowed himself to be carried away by his admiration for everything connected with Bonaparte, to have given such a glowing account of his mistress's beauty. Among the brunettes of Egypt her fair skin was evidently an attraction; in France she would not have been noticed at all.

It appears that her conduct at Carcassonne was praiseworthy and her way of life regular. People had nicknamed her "Bellilotte," not only because she was pretty but because it was a diminutive of her own name Bellisle. Following her occupation of dressmaker she used to go out to work by the day at several houses in the town, particularly at that of a barrister called de Sales. He and his wife being rather taken with her, displayed considerable interest in her welfare. M. de Sales, as is customary with members of his profession, prided himself on being something of a *littérateur*. He was in the habit of composing songs which

[1] General Baron Paulin, *Souvenirs*, p. 230.

he taught to Bellilotte, and she used to sing them when making his wife's dresses.

Everything then was going on capitally, and the sempstress was justly regarded as a good girl, when she happened one day to catch the eye of a young man who had formerly been in the army. He was the son of a retired merchant called Fourès. He fell so deeply in love with her blue eyes and fair tresses that his appetite began to fail him. The good reputation she enjoyed decided him to ask her in marriage. Unfortunately, if the poor young man was in love, and that seems beyond doubt, it is equally certain that his features were not of the cast that women usually lose their heads about, and so it happened that only a lukewarm reception was accorded to the attentions of this suitor who wished there and then to entrust his honour and his happiness to the young woman's keeping. Every day, however, the worthy fellow became more and more importunate. Quite unable to make up her mind, Bellilotte asked M. and Madame de Sales for their advice. The barrister's view was that a girl as "good-looking and clever" as she was—in the country, for lack of points of comparison, people often get exaggerated notions of a woman's good looks and cleverness—would be likely to make a much better match in Paris than at Carcassonne. M. de Sales himself intended going to Paris in order to display his talents—he considered that like Bellilotte's they were rather wasted at Carcassonne—and he prevailed upon her to temporise, telling her that he himself proposed to set up in the capital, that he would take her too and find the means to enable her to make a match that would be

far worthier of her than the proposed alliance with Fourès.

The little *ouvrière* desired nothing better than to go and try her fortune in Paris. She therefore told the advocate that she would take his advice and gladly go with him. Everything being settled, they were only waiting till M. de Sales's affairs permitted him to leave Carcassonne, when an event occurred which, though in itself commonplace enough, served to alter all those beautiful plans, and exercised a decisive influence over the destiny of the little *ouvrière*.

M. and Madame de Sales one day had some friends to dinner. It was the custom of the period, especially in the provinces, to have a little music during dessert. As Bellilotte was in the house busy with some linen that required mending, the barrister went to find her, brought her into the dining-room and told her to sing. His idea was probably not so much to listen to and afford his guests an opportunity of listening to the fresh voice of the sempstress, as to listen to and afford his guests the opportunity of listening to his own compositions, which, as we have already explained, he had made Bellilotte learn by heart.

After a little pressing, she did as she was bid. She recited her master's verses and sang his songs, and made a great hit. Never had there been known at Carcassonne an *ouvrière* who could recite and sing so well. It might have been said at that time that there was not a girl, even in "society," who was so skilled in these arts as she was. Pauline was highly delighted with her success, and the compliments that were paid her from all sides warmed her heart deliciously. More-

over the *mise-en-scène*, the sight of all the luxuries on the table, together with a glass or two of champagne which were given her, roused within her for the first time in her life feelings of ambition. "I too," she said to herself, "should like to have a house of my own and give dinner-parties. I too should like to shine and be made much of. Fourès has money; I will marry him."

She carried out her intention, and poor Fourès, in the seventh heaven of delight, led her to the altar. He thought she had capitulated to his constancy and his love, whereas the fact of the matter was that his money had purchased her surrender.

The young couple got on excellently together, and nothing seemed destined to interfere with their happiness, when one day the news reached Carcassonne that preparations were being made for a mysterious military expedition, that General Bonaparte was to command it and that ex-soldiers who wished to volunteer for service would be allowed to retain their former rank. This news set Fourès thinking. To his youthful and adventurous disposition the expedition seemed to offer alluring prospects. "If I rejoin," said he to his wife, "I shall get my lieutenant's epaulettes back again, and in a few months I shall be promoted to a captaincy. That is well enough in itself, but by remaining in the army I should be certain to attain still higher rank. You would like to be the 'Citoyenne Commandante' I suppose?" They became enthusiastic over the idea and the next day Fourès formally rejoined the colours. A few days later he left for Toulon accompanied by his wife dressed in male attire. They embarked and both arrived without mishap in Egypt.

How General Bonaparte saw Madame Fourès for the first time, and the more than cavalier manner in which he made her acquaintance, has already been related.

Such gross indelicacy should have for ever alienated the feelings of any self-respecting woman, though it is true that no self-respecting woman would ever have exposed herself to such an experience by going without her husband to a soldiers' luncheon-party. Madame Fourès, however, seems to have taken no exception to Bonaparte's unmannerliness. It is indeed infinitely probable that it was with her concurrence that her husband's removal was decided upon. His presence was troublesome to everybody. As long as he remained Bonaparte could not see his mistress when he wished to, nor was she in a position to derive from the *liaison* all the advantages she looked for. Sooner or later the unlucky husband must have perceived how he was being duped by the woman he had married for love. It was, therefore, highly expedient to get him out of the way. "By a piece of delicate scheming," says Bourrienne, "he was sent away on special service."[1] This is how it was arranged.

General Berthier, who had been a most willing agent in discovering the identity of the beautiful blonde with the white teeth, addressed himself with no less willingness to the task of removing her inconvenient husband. A few days after the memorable dinner at General Dupuy's, Lieutenant Fourès was sent for. Such a summons could not fail to excite wonder in the mind of an officer of his modest rank, and Fourès was greatly astonished, even more as-

[1] Bourrienne, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 174.

tonished than he had been when his wife had been invited without him to General Dupuy's. However, they were in Egypt, in the land of the Pharaohs, and it might be that things went on differently there from what they did in Europe. Greatly mystified, and, it may be, a little apprehensive also, he presented himself before Berthier.

"My dear Fourès," said the Chief of the Staff, "more fortunate than the rest of us, you are about to see France once more. The Commander-in-Chief has had excellent reports of you and he wishes to confer upon you a very flattering distinction. He is sending you to Paris with despatches for the Directory. You will leave immediately. Here are orders for the commandant at the port of Alexandria. Well, *bon voyage!* I wish I were in your shoes."

The General little dreamt when indulging in this persiflage at the expense of the luckless lieutenant, that he himself was as much a dupe as the man he was bantering with such engaging aplomb. His mistress was the famous Madame Visconti, with whom he was madly in love. He had erected an altar to her, not only an invisible one in his heart, but also a material one in a tent next to his own. This altar was carried about from place to place wherever the army went. Upon it he placed the portrait of his divinity, and every day he knelt and recited a litany before it. At this very time, however, Madame Visconti was playing him false with M. Alexandre de Laborde, and she was constantly surrounded by a cluster of youthful small-fry.

Berthier would have opened his eyes had he been aware of this, but his astonishment would not have

equalled that of Lieutenant Fourès. For (the latter asked himself) how came he, a simple officer of the line, with no connexion whatever with the general staff, to be entrusted with a mission to the Executive Directory of the French Republic! Of late, not a day had passed without bringing forth its crop of marvels.

He confusedly murmured his thanks for the signal mark of confidence which the Commander-in-Chief had bestowed upon him, and took his leave, saying that as he had to be off at once he had only just time to tell his wife to get their things together and prepare for the journey.

"Your wife," exclaimed Berthier. "My dear fellow, what madness! How could you dream of taking your wife with you on such a journey? In the first place she would be exceedingly ill on the little cutter which is to take you, and then the voyage is not unattended by danger. Suppose you were captured by an English cruiser. English officers have an eye for the fair sex; they do not, as you know, stand on ceremony with women, and they might perhaps treat Madame Fourès not precisely like a prisoner of war. Hang it all! When a man has been whole months at sea, you know . . ."

Fourès had no choice but to obey; nevertheless, on returning to his quarters to prepare for the start, he could not help reflecting on the quaint turn of fortune which had dragged him out of his obscurity to be the bearer of most important correspondence to the Directory. He was doubtless simple enough to ascribe this favour to those excellent qualities of which Berthier had spoken, and he told his wife all about the matter.

She knew more about it than he did, but pretended to be surprised and perhaps also distressed at not being able to accompany him. If she had betrayed satisfaction or even indifference, would she not have run the risk of rousing the lieutenant's suspicions? She therefore conscientiously—that is to say with absolute hypocrisy—played the part of the sorrowing wife. She belonged to a class of women, more numerous than is generally supposed, who have a propensity for any action that is dubious, equivocal, or even positively culpable. No one merited the title of daughter of Eve more thoroughly than she. At length, after tender adieux, the lieutenant set out. He had just received from General Berthier the following orders which detailed his duties:—

> "Citoyen Fourès, lieutenant in the 22nd regiment of light infantry, is commanded to leave by the first diligence for Rosetta, and to proceed to Alexandria, where he will embark. Citoyen Fourès will be the bearer of despatches which he must not open till he is at sea, and which will contain his instructions."[1]

The instructions consisted of a packet of papers of no importance, which were given to the lieutenant in the belief that his vessel would be seized by the English and he himself conveyed as a prisoner to England.

The manœuvre was far from creditable, and the General's infatuation for a *grisette* cost the State a ship and a ship's crew. There have been people, however, who have admired such conduct, or at least derived amusement from it. As for the woman who

[1] *Correspondance de Napoléon 1er*, Vol. V, p. 216, pièce 3775. To Citizen Fourès, lieutenant de chasseurs. Cairo, 18th December, 1798.

so dishonourably took part in this shameless comedy at the expense of the worthy fellow who had rescued her from poverty and given her a social position to which without him she could scarcely have aspired, no one will dream of disputing her right to the well-merited description of shameless wanton. And yet she has her eulogists. It is the way of the world to heap scorn upon the man who has been deceived by his wife while the woman who deceived him is looked upon as an altogether superior being.

As soon as she had got rid of her husband, the amiable Pauline gave herself up body and soul to the Commander-in-Chief. No secret was made of their relationship. "Bonaparte," says Bourrienne, "had a house fitted up for her near Elfy Bey's palace where we were quartered. He often took it into his head about three o'clock to order dinner at her house. I used to go there alone with him at seven o'clock and generally left at nine."[1] Frequently, too, when dinner was over they would have an open carriage and go for a drive with two aides-de-camp prancing at their side. Occasionally this duty fell to the lot of Eugène de Beauharnais, Madame Bonaparte's son. It took him a long time to perceive what an unbecoming rôle it was; it may indeed have been necessary to point out to him how ill it beseemed him to act as guard of *honour* to the mistress of his mother's husband. However, he did not forget in his odd way to make mention of the matter in his memoirs,[2] and he seems to have borne his stepfather a grudge on account of it.

[1] Bourrienne, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 174.
[2] Prince Eugène, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 46.

Madame Fourès, whom the whole army now dubbed *Notre Souveraine de l'Orient*,[1] was playing the dutiful mistress at Cairo while her husband was being wafted towards the shores of France. But the sea was furrowed in all directions by the English cruisers, and few were the vessels which, setting sail from Egypt, succeeded in threading the complicated network of hostile ships that were ever on the look-out for prey. Fourès' cutter met with the usual fate, and fell into the hands of the enemy.

The English had innumerable spies in Egypt who kept them informed with the utmost accuracy concerning every possible topic, not excepting the *chronique galante* of the French army; and the private letters which they had found on captured vessels completed their information on these matters. It thus happened that they already knew all about General Bonaparte's *liaison* with Madame Fourès and the despatch of her husband to Europe.

The English commodore who seized Lieut. Fourès' vessel was therefore as pleased as could be with his capture. After examining the papers which he had upon him and satisfying himself of their insignificance, knowing too that the lieutenant had been sent away from Egypt in order to give a free hand to the General and his mistress, he maliciously took it into his head to play a trick on Bonaparte.

"I am under orders," he told Fourès, "to make a prolonged cruise in Eastern waters before returning to England; I shall be away for months and cannot keep you on board during the whole of the voyage.

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 63.

After thinking the matter over, I have decided to put you ashore on the coast of Egypt and you will then be at liberty to go where you please."

The lieutenant was profuse in his thanks, bestowing high praises on the magnanimity of the English people in general and on that of the commodore in particular. The latter wished him luck and they parted on excellent terms.

No sooner does Fourès set foot on land than he rushes off as hard as he can to Cairo to embrace his wife. He gets to his house and finds it empty. In great perturbation he makes enquiries about Pauline, and in the ill-dissembled smiles that greet him reads the hideous truth. Alas! his Pauline is now the Pauline of the Commander-in-Chief.

Poor fellow; he dearly loved his wife, and his indignation may be imagined when, instead of being welcomed by her smiling face, he only encountered evidences of her most heartless treachery.

When the first outbreak of wrath was over, Fourès insisted on going to the house of Elfy Bey to see the woman who had made treachery her pastime and had light-heartedly sent her husband to rot his bones on a British man-of-war. He forced his way to where the wretched creature was, violently upbraided her with her detestable misdeeds and created a terrible scene.

But to what result could it all lead? Scarcely to a reconciliation, for when a man has no longer any respect for his wife, living with her becomes an impossibility. Fourès evidently recognised this, for the very same day he lodged a petition for divorce. Clearly this was the best possible solution of the

difficulty. The Commissioner Sartelon, in his capacity of *officier de l'état civil*, pronounced a decree of divorce, and poor Fourès, once more a free man, had plenty of leisure to reflect on the drawbacks involved in marrying a woman simply for her good looks. When her endowments consist of this alone, anything may be expected of her—except anything to her credit—and he, poor fellow, whose wife displayed no gratitude to him for having raised her to his level, had now had a bitter experience of this truth. But every man who commits a folly of this kind deludes himself with the idea that the woman of his choice will prove an exception to the rule and, as Boileau has it—

> Croit que Dieu tout exprès, d'une côte nouvelle
> A tiré pour lui seul une femme fidèle.

Women of this type invariably appear to think that they ought to have the moon if they cry for it. Never for an instant do they dream of showing gratitude for benefits received. They do not even know what gratitude means; but this is not to be wondered at, since they have no heart. They are but trinkets, mere playthings, and, for the most part, not too diverting at that. They expect a man for ever to be on his knees burning the incense of adoration at their shrine, but soon they long for new incense and, sooner still, for a new adorer. For their tawdry favours a man must pay terribly dear—often with his peace of mind, his happiness, his prospects, and not seldom with his life and honour. Terrible, in truth, is the coquette, and the ancients showed their wisdom in typifying her in that Circe who changed men into—

we need not name the animals. And has our poor humanity altered a whit since Homer's day?

General Bonaparte, like the veriest schoolboy, took his *amourette* with Pauline quite seriously. He even went so far in his *naïveté* as to talk about her to all his staff. He told everyone about his feelings for her just as, on taking up his command in Italy, he showed his Josephine's portrait to his generals and insisted on their admiring her elegance and beauty. He even went so far as to entertain the idea of marrying this *grisette*. True, the very perfunctory resistance she had offered to his onslaught on her virtue was scarcely calculated to gain for her the respect of most people, but Bonaparte never seems to have been conscious of what a true woman really should be. Why had he married Josephine—for her gifts? She had none. For her virtue and principles? Poor soul! she did not even know what the words meant. Because of the love she bore him? Aye, there you have it! He wanted someone to love him, and merely because she murmured fond words in his ear, he believed that the woman who gave herself to him loved him truly and for himself alone. Because she threw herself into his arms, he thought her love sincere—as if, forsooth, she had not played the same comedy with other men before him. In his simplicity he had placed the utmost faith in her protestations and had been witless enough to marry her. And after the marriage Josephine, that treasure of treasures, that eighth wonder of the world, had made him see as clear as daylight what a fool he was where love and women were concerned.

Molière says—

Épouser une sotte est pour n'être point sot,

but that idea (which by the way is a most fallacious one) had not influenced Bonaparte, for he had sincerely believed Josephine to be a woman of lofty character. Love had tied a bandage before his eyes, and not the least remarkable thing about the man was the very energy of that blindness and the follies it led him to commit. But it is true that men whose training has not been such as to put them on their guard—the training, that is to say, that only an intelligent mother can impart—generally find themselves in a similar position.

So the conqueror of Egypt had it in his mind to wed the former *ouvrière* of Carcassonne. His previous experiment in making a wife of a mistress had not had a very encouraging result, but then, with regard to women, he never learned wisdom. Before marrying her, however, he was anxious for her to bear him a child. It sounds preposterous, but it is nevertheless the fact. Having once married a woman whose child-bearing days were over, it appears that before entering on any further undertaking of the kind he wished to make sure of the fruitfulness of her successor. "Bonaparte," we are told by Bourrienne, "had set his heart on having a child by this pretty woman. I used to speak to him about it during the *tête-à-tête* luncheons we often had together. 'Well, I can't help it,' was his reply; 'the little stupid cannot get one.' But she—when the great advantage of having a child by Bonaparte was impressed on her—exclaimed, 'Good gracious! it isn't my fault.'"[1]

[1] Bourrienne, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 174.

Napoleon was very much in love with Madame Fourès. Amidst the dark-skinned women of Egypt her fair hair and complexion must have appeared to great advantage. "She had plenty of mother-wit," General Junot tells us, "and longed to occupy a prominent position, but she coupled with all this a total ignorance of the ways of society—that is to say of manners that betoken good breeding and refinement."[1] This defect Bonaparte, whose own breeding was by no means perfect, may well have failed to perceive.

What Junot terms "mother-wit" was rather a sort of gaiety that would out, that was for ever finding vent in laughter; the kind of careless inconsequence that is such a common characteristic of women of the *ouvrière* class, and which—with France so far away—might well have had its effect. Had Bonaparte seen Madame Fourès a year later in Paris he assuredly would have taken no notice of her. "She was just as thoughtless and light-hearted as a child of twelve," says the Duchesse d'Abrantès, who heard a good deal about her from her husband. "Napoleon used sometimes to quiz her about the laughter and joking that were going on the day he met her on the road to Boulak. She was brought into contact with many of the treasury officials attached to the Army of the East, and Bonaparte laughingly twitted her about her *liaisons* with them. He would not have done so, even in jest, had he thought there was the slightest truth in what he said. As a matter of fact there was not."[2] That is a most indulgent statement on the part of Madame d'Abrantès

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 65.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

and poor Fourès was far from sharing her view. It may be quite possible, however, that as Bonaparte's mistress she was true to her lover; at any rate he felt no jealousy since he allowed her to remain on friendly terms with young treasury officials.

Bonaparte on quitting Egypt appears to have said something to Madame Fourès about her departure, but to Kléber he simply gave sealed instructions when handing over the command. The latter does not seem to have shown her the attention and respect to which she deemed herself entitled, and in this he was, of course, quite right. Kléber was in command of the army, and it was none of his business to trouble about an adventuress who had forsaken her husband and was now, in turn, abandoned by her lover.

But Napoleon had left orders with Kléber to send home to France, as soon as opportunity occurred, certain people of whom he furnished him with a list. Among them was Madame Fourès. However, from the moment Bonaparte relinquished his command, the question of deciding who should go and who should stay was one that concerned Kléber alone. Doubtless he had none too much room for all the sick and wounded he wanted to send home on the first opportunity, for he refused a passport to Madame Fourès. This was called persecution on his part, but as a matter of fact he was acting in strict accordance with his duty It was far more urgent to find a berth on board for a loyal, suffering soldier whose return to France was to restore him to health, than to make room for a mere adventuress. But Madame Fourès poured her tale of woe into the ear of Doctor Desgenettes, who used his

influence with Kléber and persuaded him, on some pretext or another, to allow her to leave in the first transport.

And so she went. Her stay in Egypt had become the reverse of pleasant; she not only ran the risk of meeting her former husband—and people do not care to meet those whom they have wronged—but the scandal-mongers, within whose range the position she had made herself in Egypt had naturally brought her, judged her with severity, and former flatterers, seized with sudden scruples now Bonaparte had gone, turned their backs on her.

No sooner had she set foot in France than she rushed off post-haste to Paris. She hoped that the General would receive her once more as his favourite, and her ardour was not in any way diminished by the position he now occupied as Chief Magistrate of the Republic and First Consul. If Bonaparte had failed in his *coup d'état* and had been transported to Sinnamary, it is scarcely probable that she would have been in such a hurry to rejoin him. The events of 1815 give proof of this.

The First Consul was anything but delighted at being called upon to determine the lot of Madame Fourès. He had very pleasant recollections of her, and nothing would have been more to his taste than to continue in Paris the idyll he had begun in so unedifying a manner on the banks of the Nile. But his position, and still more the ill-natured gossip of the Parisians, forbade him to do so. Political passions were then roused to a height hardly conceivable nowadays, and whether republican or royalist it was

wise not to lay oneself open to attack. The *liaison* which he had carried on in Egypt was already common property in Paris, and the story of its commencement was being whispered everywhere. Lampoons dealing with the subject were scattered broadcast. One of them was entitled *Une Quinzaine du grand Alcandre*. It appeared fortnightly, and alluded in the most transparent fashion to the adventure with the *grisette*. It stated amongst other things that the First Consul spent vast sums of money on the fair Pauline, and she herself was attacked with equal virulence.

Bonaparte was aware of it all, but the Titanic task involved in restoring and reorganising the social fabric scarcely allowed him to waste his time in dallying with a mistress, and Josephine, with whom he was reconciled and in whose society he enjoyed a sort of comfortable, humdrum tranquillity, seemed to be all he asked for. He therefore refused to see Madame Fourès. It caused him a pang, but on this occasion he knew how to play the man and be firm. True, he gave her enormous pecuniary compensation, and on this point the *Quinzaine du grand Alcandre* had not been misinformed. Bellilotte accepted everything. Duroc, who was then entering on his duties as Napoleon's private secretary in connexion with these delicate matters, and was "specially entrusted with the duty of making arrangements for her livelihood," was the bearer of presents—principally in the shape of money—from the Consul. Attached to them, however, was one condition, which politics, appearances and Josephine's jealousy all combined to impose on Bonaparte as well as on Bellilotte, and that was that she should not live

in Paris. She agreed to everything since they gave her money, and rented or purchased a little house at Belleville, near the Prés Saint-Gervais. Thence she came to Paris whenever she wished and was a constant visitor at the theatre.

But Madame Fourès' story is not ended.

Egypt had slipped from our hands. General Menou, who had taken over the command after Kléber's assassination, had in vain become a Mahometan, taken Abdullah for his name and an Egyptian woman for his wife. None of these things had made up for his lack of ability and he had lost Egypt. In accordance with the terms of the arrangement which he concluded with the English, the French were to evacuate the country and be brought back to France. The treaty was signed and thus it came to pass that Lieutenant Fourès returned to Paris. It appears, and it does not say much for his strength of mind, that his wife's base treachery had not killed all his love for her. One would imagine that it could only be in a singularly weak individual that love would survive such a lapse as hers had been; misfortune and grief only give firmness to such minds as are of the requisite quality to profit by the lesson.

Fourès, then, came to Paris more deeply in love with his wife than ever. He sought and found her and tried to prevail on her to resume with him their former relations as man and wife. But Bellilotte did not see matters in the same light. Though she had given way to the coarse importunities of Bonaparte, she was by no means prepared to yield to the tender supplications of the lieutenant. That would have been to derogate from her dignity. Besides, had she not been

divorced? What then did he mean, this wretched lieutenant, by claiming her as his wife?

Though Fourès made a mistake in wishing to take back a woman of whom he ought to have considered himself very well rid, he was, so far as the law was concerned, fully within his rights. The decree of divorce which had been pronounced in Egypt had become null and void. Pauline, irresponsible as ever, had neglected to have it made absolute in France within the period prescribed by law, and Fourès, of course, had taken good care not to make up for his wife's negligence. Hence a series of claims and counter-claims, and such a succession of disputes and bickerings that they must have thought themselves back again in their married days. At last Bellilotte betook herself to the First Consul to solicit his intervention in order to put an end to the anomalous position in which she found herself.

Bonaparte with all his taste for love-affairs had a strong dislike to the pother they usually bring in their train, and he was excessively annoyed at the talk which this abortive divorce had occasioned. He gave orders that an immediate settlement should be arrived at and told Pauline to regularise her position herself by finding another husband. As luck would have it, this did not involve much difficulty. There are usually plenty of fools ready to marry women of that kind; the kind indeed most sought after by men, who somehow find in them innumerable unexpected virtues and attractions visible only to the blind.

Pauline at this moment happened to have within her reach a specimen of this very race of blind men. It

chanced, however, that in money-matters he was very clear-headed and practical. When a man has no prejudices regarding a woman's character, he would be a triple fool to have any scruples about her money. The individual in question, a certain M. Ranchouppe or de Ranchoup, allured by Bellilotte's charms, declared to her that after the most careful consideration he believed her to be the only woman in the world sufficiently worthy of esteem and respect to make him happy. Pauline, flattered by these words, welcomed with all the dignity at her command a man so discerning as to discover beneath appearances that were perhaps a trifle misleading the solid qualities with which Heaven had endowed her. Raising Ranchoup, who had fallen on his knees to beg the honour of her hand, she told him that before giving him a definite reply she would ask the advice of the First Consul, who was so good as to take some interest in her welfare.

Bonaparte was overjoyed at the solution which Providence thus afforded to an awkward dilemma. "By all means let her marry Ranchoup," he exclaimed. "I will make a Consul of him."

And so it happened that Bellilotte, denied the distinction of becoming the mistress of the First Consul, had to content herself with being the lawful consort of the last; for Ranchoup was appointed to a consulship somewhere in Spain. It was not all she had dreamed, but then ambition must have a limit, and for a poor working girl of Carcassonne she had not done so badly after all.

The marriage took place in spite of the luckless Fourès, who still longed to have her back again, and

who went about with crestfallen air, saying, "When I married her she was poor and virtuous. No one sought after her then because no one knew how she would conduct herself; and now when all the world knows that she has turned out badly everyone longs to possess her. It is beyond my comprehension." If he had known any Latin he might have consoled himself by repeating the immortal line—

O vanas hominum mentes! O pectora cæca!

The new Consul departed with his wife for the scene of his duties, and for a few years we hear no more of Pauline. But she grew weary of living abroad, and in no long time played her second husband the same trick she had played the first—that is to say, she gave him the slip—and returned to Paris. There she soon became very well known by the name of Madame de Ranchoup. She took up her abode in the Rue Napoléon—a choice of residence which was possibly dictated by feelings of retrospective vanity—where she kept up a considerable establishment. "Young, attractive and witty," writes one of her friends, "she was greatly interested in art, and painted pictures herself. But she gave herself over heart and soul to worldly pleasures. Recklessly extravagant and completely ignorant of the value of money, she thought of nothing but dances, theatres, horses and carriages."[1]

Did Madame de Ranchoup retain any affection for the man who had become Emperor of the French? It is scarcely probable. A woman of such a fickle disposition would hardly be capable of any affection

[1] Général Baron Paulin, *Souvenirs*, p. 229.

at all unless it were for dissipation and finery. What, however, is beyond question is that she always evinced the greatest eagerness to meet him. Gratitude for the huge sums of money he gave her may have accounted for this, or perhaps, somewhere in the back of her mind, she may have nourished the hope that as she had been his "favourite" when Conqueror of Egypt she might play a similar rôle now that he had become Emperor. "Therefore," as General Paulin again informs us, "she was always in the forefront at every fête in order that she might not be overlooked. There was never a masked ball which the Emperor was expected to attend but she was among the guests. She hoped that she might be able to avail herself of the freedom that obtains at such gatherings to engage him in conversation, if only for a minute or two. One night—it was at one of those brilliant balls that used to be given by the Prince de Neufchâtel in the Boulevard des Capucines and by Cambacérès and M. de Champagny at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—she became the happiest of women, for she recognised the Emperor beneath his iron-grey domino. She had even spoken with him for a few moments and made him laugh at her sallies; nor had she neglected to ensure that her identity should penetrate the fascinating disguise she was wearing. I do not know what he said to her or what interpretation she put upon his words, but to describe the state of jubilation she was in when I saw her a moment or so afterwards is utterly beyond my powers."[1]

While we are dealing with Madame Fourès we must

[1] Général Baron Paulin, *Souvenirs*, p. 230.

not omit to mention that she is associated with one of the few *bons mots* of Napoleon's life. It was uttered in the course of a conversation of a somewhat risky character which took place during the Consulate between Bonaparte and Madame Junot. The latter took a note of it and this is roughly how it ran.

"'Do you know that your husband kept a regular seraglio over in Egypt, Madame Junot?'

"'So he has told me, General. Indeed I have a very pleasing portrait of Jaunette on my bedroom mantelpiece.'

"The Chief Consul was walking rather briskly at this moment, but at the mention of Jaunette's name he stopped dead, and looking at me with an almost ludicrous expression, exclaimed—

"'You have Xraxarane's portrait?'

"'Yes, General, why not? Oh to be sure it would have been quite a different matter if Xraxarane had been at all like a certain favourite odalisque who also hails from Egypt and whom I saw only yesterday at the Comédie-Française. *She* is far from having a complexion like a ripe orange. Her hair is fair, her skin soft as satin, her teeth like pearls, and her hands . . .'

"He gave me the queerest of looks, then resuming his rapid pace, said as he went into the garden, 'What! were they playing *Les Trois Sultanes* then yesterday?'"[1]

Another of his *mots* dates from Saint Helena, and we may fittingly reproduce it here since it had to do with love and with his first wife.

Recalling the affection Josephine had for him he

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. IV, p. 169.

said that "he had no doubt she would have left a rendezvous with a lover to have come to him."[1]

That indeed was taking matters much more easily than he took them in 1796.

To return to Madame Fourès, we shall have told all there is to tell about her when we have added that, like Josephine, like Marie Louise, like Madame Walewska, in a word, like all the women who were loved by Napoleon, she forgot the man for whose sake she had so completely forgotten her husband. But further than this, in his days of adversity, she utterly repudiated him to whom she had accorded her favours and who, in memory thereof, had so liberally bestowed on her the means of gratifying the only love she ever had—the love of extravagance and foolishness of every description. Madame Fourès was merely a low-born and ill-bred imitation of Josephine. Having turned a good Royalist at the Restoration, Madame de Ranchoup dropped the veil of oblivion over her own origin and over that of her fortune. It was the logical course; she had forgotten Fourès, she was to forget Napoleon. If history still preserves the memory of such a wonderfully oblivious creature, it is but to hold it up to scorn. Madame d'Abrantès having stated in her Memoirs that Madame Fourès had wished to share Napoleon's captivity at Saint Helena, Madame Fourès had the ignoble effrontery to write to her and repudiate the generous idea with which she had been so kindly credited; an act which reveals in all its nakedness a singularly unattractive character. Certain faults may, at a pinch, be redeemed by devotion. The heart can sometimes

[1] *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, Vol. II, p. 330.

undo the wrongs that the heart has done, but Madame Fourès had no more idea of what a true heart was than she had of the meaning of the word honour. Despite all the poetry with which people have endeavoured to invest her memory, she was, when all is said and done, but a worthless and despicable wanton.

CHAPTER IV

Bonaparte carefully conceals his extra-conjugal relations—He only seeks in women some distraction from his labours—Madame Branchu—Madame Grassini; the Emperor summons her to Paris—Mademoiselle Duchesnois and Mademoiselle Georges—Mademoiselle Duchesnois at the Tuileries—The Chief Consul is not in his kindliest mood—Mademoiselle Georges with the Chief Consul, who has a fainting-fit—Mademoiselle Bourgoin of the Comédie-Française—Chaptal—An adventure in the office of the Minister of the Interior—Madame Jouberthon and General Bonaparte—Madame Junot at La Malmaison—The General pays some early and incautious visits—The young woman's distress—Conclusion of a stupid adventure—Subsequent bitterness and jealousy.

THE First Consul had returned from his short transalpine campaign covered with the laurels of Marengo. He appeared at that time like a man sent by Providence, and had scarcely any enemies save the fanatical supporters of the doctrine of Divine Right. He was the cynosure of the whole of France, and, as may be imagined, the women were not slow to cast their eyes upon him; but that was more particularly in order to attract attention to themselves. Never was a man longed for by so many feminine hearts. In the situation created for him by the stupid intrigues of Josephine, a woman ten years his senior, he was bound to become the prey of the demon of unfaithfulness. Yet it is he who has written: "A man should not cede to the impulse of his senses to a greater extent than is necessary for his physical well-

being. It is by sentiment alone that he tastes true pleasure."[1] Our depraved or vicious habits are in fact only the result of the abuse of our natural proclivities. As regards this, the strongest characters are at one with the weakest, for have not they also their failings and shortcomings?

If Bonaparte had made no secret when in Egypt of his intrigue with Bellilotte, it was because there he had only men, only soldiers, about him. Besides, Cairo was so far away from France. But home again in Paris he is for concealing the new *liaisons* which he is by no means inclined to forego. Beyond the fact that he had a feeling for propriety, for public if not private decency such as neither Louis XIV nor Louis XV nor François Ier nor Henri IV had ever had, he felt that in the state of social disintegration in which he then found his country, it was his duty to set an example of clean living. If he was so weak as not to act, we will not say in accordance with his principles but with what he knew was right; if he took advantage of his position to neglect the observance of duties imposed on society at large; if, in a word, he found morality beneficial for others but not for himself, and denied himself, in consequence, none of those pleasures with which our monarchs were wont to beguile their time, this at least is true—he did not flaunt his weakness in the public eye. He knew that to transfer his affection from one woman to another as the fancy took him, to mate himself as chance meetings or sensual desires might tempt him, like the beasts of the field, was far from acting in accordance

[1] Fr. Masson, *Napoléon inconnu*, Vol. II, p. 318.

with duty—otherwise the word would be meaningless. Nevertheless, though he set no curb upon himself, he kept his doings secret, and very few of his contemporaries, save those about his little consular court, knew anything of the great man's dissipations. In spite of it all, he retained a sort of affection of habit for his wife, whom he liked to find by his fireside when he left his study, but as for love, that was absolutely and irrevocably a thing of the past. Josephine would have none of his love when he showered it upon her —with what ardour of heart Heaven knows!—and now he takes it elsewhere and scatters it at any chance encounter. But who is to be blamed? He himself in the first place for having made such a foolish choice of a wife; she in the next for having so ill understood her duty and her husband.

In the amours of Napoleon—which by the way never lasted long—there is this noteworthy characteristic. Whatever influence a woman may have attained over him personally, he never allowed her in any way to interfere with the course of public policy. "He was never weary," says Roederer, "of emphasising the undesirable effects which women exercised on public affairs in France and the evil results which their extravagance produced in their homes."[1] "Women," he said, "are at the bottom of every intrigue. They ought to be kept to their household duties; the government salons should be closed to them, and they should be forbidden to appear in public unless they wore veils and black attire."[2] At a later date he said

[1] Roederer, *Œuvres*, Vol. III, p. 306.
[2] Arnault, *Souvenirs d'un sexagénaire*, Vol. IV, p. 104.

to Madame de Rémusat, hoping perhaps that she would take the hint: "Women must count for nothing at my court. They will not love me for it, but at least I shall enjoy peace and quiet." All this is analogous to his *dicta* at Saint Helena. "We don't understand these things at all, we Western people," he declared; "we have ruined everything by treating women too well and we have committed the great mistake of placing them almost on a level with ourselves. The Eastern races display far more wisdom and sense of the fitness of things. They have declared women to be strictly man's property and, as a matter of fact, Nature has created them to be our slaves. It is only by reason of our perverted view of things that they dare to lay claim to any sovereignty over us. They abuse certain advantages they possess in order to seduce us and then to tyrannise over us. For one woman who inspires us with worthy ideas there are a hundred who cause us to make fools of ourselves."[1] Napoleon, who was quite right on the last point, was of a very amorous disposition and consequently greatly inclined to bow to the will of the woman he loved. But the unhappy results that had marked his relations with Josephine had given the man, once for all, the upper hand of the lover. The power of will had overcome the power of love, but like most other men he learnt his lesson in the school of misfortune. What knows he who has never suffered tribulation? And for a man to be able to keep his heart in thrall must he not—once at least—have been himself its slave? Napoleon's disappointments in love left their mark upon his character. In

[1] Napoléon Bonaparte, *Œuvres littéraires*, Vol. IV, p. 485.

his youth he had been a dreamer, but the bitterness of his experience rendered him melancholy, and his anxieties deepened his melancholy into a perpetual ill-humour. It was impossible to amuse the unamusable. He became a sceptic into the bargain, and it was perfectly natural that he should. All his love, the whole treasure of his heart, he had entrusted to another, only to see it swallowed up in hopeless and irretrievable ruin.

Nevertheless, in after years, when he had become so rich in power and so poor in dreams, we shall behold the *naïveté* of bygone days visit him again; we shall see him, for a space, forgetting the majesty and the cares of empire to be once more the happy ardent student of former times.

Meanwhile all he asks of woman is relief from the anxieties involved in his duties as rallier of the people and leader of men. And what class of women could provide him with the distraction he needed more fittingly than women of the theatre? They possess intelligence, talent and renown, and that easy self-possession which relieves certain reserved natures of the embarrassment of making the first advances. Often, too, beauty is theirs, and when they have it not, they conceal its absence with such skill that they seem more richly dowered with it than those who possess it in reality. On the stage they are queens in very truth. At the time of which we are speaking the theatre played a more important part in life than it does to-day, and actresses were bound to provoke the desires of the First Consul. He loved music. A woman who can interpret with true depth of feeling the divine inspirations of the

great masters speaks to our souls more eloquently than any other; her heart's desire thrills in her very voice and finds a way to the hearts of those that hear her. Like other men—perhaps more than they, for his childhood and his youth had not been cloyed with pleasure—Napoleon was likely to be susceptible to the charms of women of the theatre and to the spell of their talents.

If we are to credit his brothers Joseph and Lucien, it would prove a long task to enumerate all the conquests he made among women of the theatrical profession. The list begins with Madame Branchu of the Opera. No one would have expected it, for "poor Madame Branchu, though she sang divinely, was diabolically ugly."[1]

His *liaison* with the brilliant and beautiful Madame Grassini has attained a wider celebrity. Its inception does not date from the time he went to Milan to be crowned, or rather to crown himself, King of Italy. The Memorial, however, says that such was the case, and Mademoiselle Avrillon repeats the statement in her Memoirs. We have already related how General Bonaparte, on the occasion of his first campaign in Italy, had succeeded in conquering not only the country itself, but also the heart of the most renowned cantatrice of the Scala Theatre at Milan.[2] We have also seen that, whether by reason of the whole-heartedness of his love for Josephine—a whole-heartedness she by no means returned—or for reasons of policy, he turned a deaf ear to the declarations, flattering as they were, which reached him from every quarter.

[1] Th. Jung, *Lucien et ses Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 289.
[2] Fouché, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 233.

But after Marengo grand fêtes were given in honour of the hero who for the second time had driven the Austrians out of Italy, and it was on the occasion of one of these fêtes at the Scala that the First Consul cast his eyes on the famous Madame Grassini. He had already been moved, in 1796, by her "splendid appearance on the stage and the sublime tones of her voice."[1]

"He sent for her," the Memorial tells us, "and after the first few introductory remarks, she reminded him that she had made her début precisely at the time he was achieving his first successes as General of the Army of Italy. 'I was then,' she said, 'at the very zenith of my beauty and power. In the *Vierges du Soleil* I monopolised all the attention of the audience, no one had eyes for any but me, all hearts were on fire for me. You, the young General, alone remained cold and yet I thought of none but you. How strange it seems, how singular! For when I indeed possessed some merit, when Italy was at my feet, I would have renounced all these triumphs for a single glance from you; but even that you denied me. And now when at length you deign to turn your gaze upon me, I, poor sorry creature, am no longer worthy of you.'"

The First Consul evidently wished to assure her that she *was* worthy of him, for one night when Bourrienne went to inform him that Genoa had capitulated, he found them asleep together. On quitting Italy Bonaparte insisted on her coming to Paris, not so much, we may suppose, in her capacity as cantatrice as in that of his mistress. "Pretty handsomely provided

[1] *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, Vol. III, p. 41.

for with an income of fifteen thousand francs a month," says Fouché, "she displayed her talents at the theatre and at the concerts of the Tuileries, where her voice made a remarkable impression. Anxious to avoid giving umbrage to Josephine, who was jealous in the extreme, he paid her only hurried and surreptitious visits. But a love affair thus carried on had no charms for a woman of her proud and ardent nature, and she conceived a violent passion for Rode, the celebrated violinist,"[1] with whom she ran away from Paris.

This reverse, in which perhaps his *amour-propre* was the sole sufferer, did not cool Napoleon's ardour for women of the stage.

But one word more concerning Madame Grassini. When she returned from her escapade with the violinist, she was accorded that sympathetic reception which the Parisians never withhold from people of talent, especially when they are associated with an incident calculated to bring them into notoriety. She was still beautiful and gentle as ever, still the same consummate mistress of the lovely contralto that had made her famous. "Received everywhere, loved by everyone," writes a woman of keen and delicate insight, "her character was distinguished by kindliness, spontaneity, true-heartedness and originality. She spoke a kind of mixture of French and Italian all her own, which allowed her to say anything, and by which she profited to make the queerest remarks, throwing the blame for what she said on her ignorance of the language whenever she uttered anything of a nature to hurt or shock."[2] Madame Ancelot

[1] Fouché, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 233.
[2] Madame Ancelot, *Foyers éteints*, p. 34.

when she sketched this little portrait doubtless had in mind a *mot* of Madame Grassini's which set all Paris laughing and is to be found in the works of M. de Las Cases. It was uttered at the time when Napoleon conferred a decoration on the male soprano Crescentini. "I gave him the Iron Crown," says Napoleon. "The decoration was foreign and so was the recipient. The indignation which the matter aroused was suddenly extinguished by a *bon mot.* It was an abomination, said a *beau parleur* of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, a horror, a veritable profanation; what claim could a man like Crescentini have to such an honour? Whereupon the beautiful Madame Grassini rose up majestically from her seat and replied with a highly theatrical tone and gesture: 'And his wound, then, Monsieur, do you consider that of no account?' At this there arose such a tempest of delighted applause that poor Madame Grassini was much embarrassed at the success of her sally."[1]

It appears that Napoleon's indifference to Madame Branchu's lack of physical charms did not last any great while. The influence of her voice and talents could not long conceal her defects from him. Other actresses, prettier than she, demonstrated to him that there was no necessary divorce betwixt talent and beauty. This time tragedy triumphed over music, and it was the Théâtre-Français that nourished the amatory fancies of the Consul.

Two young actresses, Mademoiselle Duchesnois and Mademoiselle Georges Weimer, better known as "Georges," had just made their début in high tragedy.

[1] *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène,* Vol. III, p. 566.

Mademoiselle Duchesnois, "a tragedienne of great merit but extremely plain off the stage, was passably good-looking behind the footlights, her acting being wonderfully fine, particularly in *Phèdre*. Mademoiselle Georges, who was a magnificent woman but only a moderate actress, had been trained by Mademoiselle Raucourt. Without having an exceptionally fine voice she was a good elocutionist, exhibiting plenty of lofty dignity in her style and bearing. She was on the whole a beautiful tragedy-queen, though rarely, perhaps never, did she attain the greatest heights."[1]

People swiftly became enthusiastic about these two actresses, one of whom had more talent than beauty and the other more beauty than talent. Before long, Paris was divided into two opposing factions as it had been in the days of the rivalry between Mademoiselle Clairon and Mademoiselle Dumesnil or of the feud between Madame Vestris and Madame Sainval. No one was allowed to remain a mere neutral onlooker; those who avowed or affected indifference were held in contempt. The champions of talent, however, swiftly put to rout the champions of beauty, and the enthusiasm for Mademoiselle Duchesnois became almost delirious. It was perhaps not so much with the view of paying court to the actress as of truckling to the First Consul, who was known to favour Mademoiselle Georges, that Geoffroy, a critic, and an official journalist, was one day bold enough to criticise the acting of Mademoiselle Duchesnois and to aver that Mademoiselle Georges was the finer artist. This proved a regular call to arms. The following letter from the

[1] Th. Jung, *Lucien et ses Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 261.

charming Comtesse Pauline de Beaumont to M. Pasquier is an echo of a quarrel, now long forgotten, which in its day caused the ink to flow in torrents.

> "At length I have had lunch with Mademoiselle Duchesnois; I was literally enchanted with her. It is quite impossible to forgive the people who find her dull. She is simple-mannered, naïve and given to day-dreaming, but if you find means of engaging her attention her eyes light up, her face grows beautiful. She speaks well and without any waste of words, and never fails to grasp one's meaning; all that is necessary is to awaken the sensitive chords of her nature. She is very reserved with men and very deferential with women. No! her conduct is certainly not that of a dullard."[1]

Such was the woman over whom Paris had gone mad. In order apparently to study her the better and to be able to form a personal estimate of her merits, the First Consul on his return from the Comédie-Française one evening sent for Mademoiselle Duchesnois.

The great actress obeyed the summons and came to the Tuileries. She was shown into the little suite of rooms that Bonaparte had had fitted up as an occasional refuge from Josephine's jealous surveillance. On being informed that Mademoiselle Duchesnois had arrived the Consul sent word that he would be with her before long. "In the meantime," he added, "tell her to get undressed."

The poor tragedienne, greatly taken aback at such a cavalier message, nevertheless obediently sets to work to carry out the command. She takes off her hat,

[1] Chancelier Pasquier, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 208.

unpins her garments, loosens her corsets, slips off her dress and petticoats, and at last stands up with nothing on but her chemise. Still Bonaparte does not put in an appearance. He must indeed be busy—more busy than polite apparently. Really it is carrying things a little too far. What sort of a man can he be to keep a woman standing about like this in her chemise; a woman, too, whom all Paris is raving about. "Tell her to undress," indeed! Of course the Consul must have a tremendous amount of work to get through, and besides everyone knows that he is not the man to waste time on ceremony. All the same, this is taking rather an unfair advantage of his high position. A man who hates the cold like he does ought not to overlook the fact that it is getting near the end of September, that the nights are chilly, and that she is in a room without a fire and with nothing on but her chemise.

The unlucky woman turns all this over in her mind in order to give herself patience, but before very long she loses her patience altogether. It dawns on her that she is cutting a rather ridiculous figure standing there shivering in her chemise in a room in the Tuileries. The cold catches hold of her in earnest, and she grows quite benumbed. Wrapping some of her discarded raiment around her, she asks someone to go and tell the Consul that she is still waiting. Bonaparte, not yet at the end of his task, loses patience too. "Oh well, tell her to go away again," he says pettishly. So absorbed had he become in his work that the transitory spell of the theatre had quite worn off. Reality had him in its grip once more, so good-bye

to love-making. Mademoiselle Duchesnois went away, vowing that it would be many a long day ere they caught her coming back to the Tuileries. And, in fact, Bonaparte never asked for her again.

The beauty of Mademoiselle Georges made a deeper impression on him than the talents of Mademoiselle Duchesnois. As in the case of the latter, he wished to judge her at close quarters, but in this instance he did not keep her waiting long. She was very beautiful, and in a mistress beauty is the sole desideratum; so, at least, Napoleon thought. "Take my word for it, Lucien," he afterwards said to his brother, "it is not so necessary that our wives should be good-looking; but with a mistress it is different. A plain mistress is a monstrosity; she would fail essentially in her principal, or rather, her only duty."[1]

This conversation between the brothers was not very edifying, but then neither was their conduct. Mademoiselle Georges before taking the Consul's fancy had caught this rascal of a Lucien's eye. He had been anxious to make her his mistress and with that end in view had entered upon somewhat discreditable negotiations with Mademoiselle Raucourt, under whom she had studied, with the object of getting her to plead his cause with the pretty débutante. He had even given her, as an earnest of his intentions, a recherché supper and a magnificent present. It is further recorded that after the supper in question a contract drawn up in regular form had been duly signed, whereby Mademoiselle Raucourt undertook to

[1] Th. Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires*, Vol. II. p. 286.

deliver her young pupil into the arms, into the hands we should say, of this satyr of a Lucien, the consideration being a hundred thousand francs down and an annuity for her lifetime of ten thousand.[1]

'Lucien therefore had ample knowledge of his subject when he told Napoleon that Mademoiselle Georges was one of the most beautiful women in Europe. "You might," Napoleon retorted, "have said, I think without much risk of error, *the* most beautiful woman."[2] At this time, however, the most beautiful woman in Lucien's eyes was his mistress Madame Jouberthon. Bonaparte, as is known, had commanded Mademoiselle Georges to the Tuileries. He was doubtless more at leisure on that occasion than when he had sent for her rival, for he entered on a relationship with her which lasted for a considerable period; he was in fact quite captivated by her. "Her conversation," says Constant, "he found most amusing and entertaining, and I have often heard him laugh—no delicate laugh, but great loud guffaws—at the stories with which she used to enliven her intercourse with him."[3]

It was in vain that the Chief Consul endeavoured to drop the veil of secrecy over his relations with the lovely tragedienne. As may well be imagined, the public, who were so keenly interested in everything that concerned the rival actresses, soon got wind of the matter. Some astonishment was expressed when it became known that Madame Bonaparte had sent her "a splendid scarlet cloak embroidered with

[1] Reichard, *Un hiver à Paris sous le Consulat*, p. 351.
[2] Th Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 290.
[3] Constant, *Mémoires*.

gold." Since, however, she had also presented Mademoiselle Duchesnois with the royal mantle she wore as Phèdre, people said with a smile that it was her way to make a present of a mantle to the women at whom her husband had thrown the handkerchief. But Josephine knew nothing then of her husband's connexion with these two actresses; this is how her eyes were opened. One day Bonaparte had been hard at work. Matters had not turned out entirely as he wished and he was in a state of nervous worry. He took it into his head to pass the night with Mademoiselle Georges with the idea apparently of calming his nerves —hardly the way to achieve his object one would have thought. She was sent for, and came to the Tuileries. About two o'clock in the morning the whole palace was awakened by a desperate ringing at the Consul's bell. On hurrying to see what was the matter they found Bonaparte in a swoon and Mademoiselle Georges in a terrified condition doing her utmost to restore him to animation. One of the attendants thought it right to inform Josephine, who hurriedly slipped on a dressing-gown and appeared on the scene. Picture her holding a bottle of smelling-salts to her husband's nose while Mademoiselle Georges *en chemise* raises his head and dashes water on his temples! After a time Bonaparte comes round, and seeing his wife in the room flies into a terrible fury. He scolds the unlucky Georges for having roused the whole palace for a mere nothing, and puts himself into such a frenzy of passion that he nearly faints away again. Josephine retires; Mademoiselle Georges likewise disappears, very much upset, as one may guess, at what

had occurred, and Napoleon never forgave her for losing her head. As for Josephine, she thenceforth thought of nothing but of catching her husband again *in flagrante delicto*, and Madame de Rémusat records an amusing story of an expedition she undertook with her one night with the object of taking him unawares. This, however, she did not succeed in doing until three years afterwards at Saint-Cloud in circumstances which will be recounted later.

The public were not in the dark about the fancy which Bonaparte had conceived for Mademoiselle Georges. They were ever ready to seize on lines which might be applicable to Napoleon and his doings. And so every time *Cinna* was performed—and that was very often—they broke out into applause that nearly brought the house down when they heard that famous line which the pretty *sociétaire* of the Comédie-Française pronounced so admirably :—

Si j'ai séduit Cinna, j'en séduirai bien d'autres.

Frequently, too, on leaving the theatre Mademoiselle Georges would betake herself to the Tuileries, where the Chief Consul would be awaiting her. But as Bonaparte was anxious to avoid having his assignations disturbed by his wife, of whose eavesdropping and espionage he was perfectly well aware, he took a little house in the Allée des Veuves."[1]

Apropos of Mademoiselle Georges the following is worthy of note. When she appeared on the stage with the actor Lafond—as she did in Voltaire's *Tancrède* for example—there was presented the spectacle of Napo-

[1] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 45.

leon Bonaparte's mistress carrying on a dialogue with Pauline Bonaparte's lover. The public, who were in the secret, were highly amused at the association.

The attempts which the Chief Consul made to conceal his movements were fruitless; he could not prevent people discovering whither he went and whom he was in the habit of receiving. Too many were interested in finding out. Merely for the sake of curiosity, the men and women who composed the little Consular court were anxious to possess precise information regarding their master's doings; while Madame Bonaparte, on the other hand, whose jealousy was now thoroughly on the *qui vive*, paid spies to keep a watch on her husband. The valets and femmes-de-chambre on whom this task devolved were no more reticent than she was herself, and everyone at the Tuileries soon got to know all about the Chief Magistrate's frequent voyages to the Isle of Cythera.

As it turns out, however, it is not to this domestic detective agency that we owe the discovery of the General's brief intrigue with Mademoiselle Bourgoin, another *sociétaire* of the Comédie-Française. Without vouching for its authenticity, the *Biographie Michaud* makes mention of the report. "Although Mademoiselle Bourgoin," we read, "may not have attained the highest rank in her profession, she had achieved some notoriety in the social world by reason of the sparkling originality of her repartee."[1] No doubt she

[1] Mademoiselle Bourgoin, a pretty woman and a pleasing actress, was a sort of celebrity on account of her rather suggestive *bons mots*—utterances somewhat in the style of Mademoiselle Arnould's (Th. Jung, *Lucien et ses Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 262).



Gerard, pinx. *Manuel*

MADEMOISELLE GEORGES WEIMER

indulged rather too freely in remarks that were scarcely models of propriety, but her naïvely comical manner and her very exceptional attractions caused certain phrases of hers to find favour which would not have been tolerated had they proceeded from less bewitching lips. Nor did the luxury with which she was surrounded or the lofty rank of her lovers—among whom are to be numbered some crowned heads and as the report goes even Napoleon himself—ever induce her to forget her origin. The report mentioned by the *Biographie Michaud* has been since confirmed.[1] One evening the Chief Consul was at work in his room with Chaptal, the Minister of the Interior, when Mademoiselle Bourgoin was announced. Now, for some time past Mademoiselle Bourgoin had been Chaptal's mistress, and taking in the situation at a glance, he snatched up his papers, seized his portfolio and went away at once. As soon as he reached home he sent in his resignation.

It seems that the Chief Consul had arranged this little *coup de théâtre* with the actress for the special purpose of getting rid of Chaptal and replacing him by his brother Lucien, who was more disposed to further his plans for the future. The comedy was well played, but Bonaparte henceforth had to number Chaptal among his enemies. If the trick by which Chaptal was deprived of his mistress was a singular one, the circumstances which led to his making her acquaintance were none the less so. She was introduced to him by the man who subsequently became Baron Capelle, Prefect of the Empire, Princess Elisa's

[1] See Chaptal, *Mes souvenirs sur Napoléon*, Preface, p. 106.

lover and finally Minister of Charles X. This is the story. M. Capelle, at that time an ordinary clerk in the Ministry of the Interior, one day chanced to run across a young girl in one of the corridors making strenuous efforts to put her dress, which had been very roughly handled, into some sort of order. She seemed in a state of painful agitation and was weeping copiously. M. Capelle went up to her and was enquiring the cause of her distress when he perceived that he was addressing Mademoiselle Bourgoin, who had just made her début at the Comédie-Française. "I have just come away from M. Esménard's room," she sobbed; "he has treated me most cruelly." She then proceeded to give him all the details of the affair, exclaiming at the end, "If only he had not been so perfectly hideous!" While recounting her misadventure she had ceased to weep, nay, she was even smiling, and as her glance fell on the young and elegant Capelle, the latter began to think that if Esménard was a scoundrel he was a particularly lucky one.

The incident was altogether too much out of the way for the young attaché not to bring it to the notice of his chief. He told him the whole story and Monsieur Chaptal in a state of great indignation sent for—whom do you think? Monsieur Esménard? Not a bit of it, what was done could not be undone. He sent for Mademoiselle Bourgoin. He treated her with the utmost kindness, and in order to console her for her misadventure gave her—a second edition of it. This time the actress made no complaint. The minister had doubtless gone more diplomatically to work than

Esménard, and the end of it was that they were enchanted with each other.

Mademoiselle Bourgoin had every cause to congratulate herself on her *liaison* with Chaptal. The young tragedienne united with great personal beauty —her eyes were superb—a fund of careless gaiety which she agreeably seasoned with more or less daring observations, to the great delectation of our scientific politician. As we have said, she had no reason to regret his learned "collaboration," for it was owing to Chaptal's influence that she soon became a *sociétaire*. She was annoyed, however, with her protector for giving her up when he relinquished office, and by way of being revenged on him, she afterwards called him "papa clystère" because he was a chemist, which she took to be the same thing as a druggist.[1]

It has been alleged that Mademoiselle Bourgoin had cause to complain of unkindness on the part of the First Consul, but all women who are unable to persuade their husbands or their lovers to pander to their every caprice declare that they are full of faults. Such no doubt is the explanation in the present instance. It is probable that Bonaparte refused to grant his mistress everything she asked for, and in revenge she set herself to pick holes in his character. Does not this also account for her becoming a fervent royalist at the Restoration ?

If we are to credit Lucien's statements about his brother (and it is doubtful whether they merit credence), the Chief Consul's fancies were by no means limited to actresses at this period. According to him,

[1] Barras, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 175.

Bonaparte looked with favour on the divorced wife of a certain man of affairs named Jouberthon, a lady more conspicuous for her beauty than for her strict interpretation of the moral law. He affirms—but the statement imposes some strain on our credulity—that she refused to listen to Bonaparte's advances. Hence the animus displayed by Napoleon against her when, in a more yielding mood, she lent a favourable ear to Lucien's own proposals. The latter, however, must have known perfectly well that this was all the merest fiction. When he said that "if the Consul so far forgot himself as to call his new sister-in-law a *coquine*, it was because she would not give herself to him,"[1] he was quite well aware that this woman whom he made his wife would have given herself with alacrity to the first comer, and that if Napoleon had not plucked her like a wayside flower it was simply because he had no inclination to do so. There would, however, have been nothing remarkable in the First Consul conceiving a desire like anyone else for Madame Jouberthon, who was in truth a very beautiful woman. But would it be extraordinary that this woman, having made advances which Bonaparte had rejected, should have borne him a grudge on account of the rebuff? Would there be anything extraordinary in this; that in order to avenge herself she gave out that Napoleon had made overtures to her of a character to which she could not listen? There we probably have the key to the situation. Women of that kind know how to adopt every mask, and that of outraged virtue is not the one of which they are least ready to avail themselves. As

[1] Th. Jung, *Lucien et ses Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 318.

for Lucien, he was in love, and there you have the whole matter in a nutshell. Being in love, he believed without question everything his mistress chose to tell him, and it is notorious what an incredible ascendency she gained over him.

Are we to suppose that Madame d'Abrantès also boasted of having awakened in the bosom of the Chief Consul a passion which only existed in her imagination? It is hardly likely, for had she wished to romance she would scarcely have gone out of her way to concoct a story of such *prima facie* improbability as that which we relate below.

In the course of the summer of 1803 Madame Bonaparte went to Plombières. She knew how immensely anxious her husband was for an heir, and, to fend off the possibility of a divorce, she went every year to undergo a course of treatment at Plombières, though whether or not she had any faith in the alleged fertilising properties of the waters there is open to doubt. More probably her motive was to preserve in her husband's mind some hopes of seeing her become a mother. At the worst it was an expedient for gaining time.

Madame Bonaparte then being at Plombières, Madame Louis, her daughter, had taken up her quarters at La Malmaison, where her presence was necessary in order that the wives of the First Consul's aides-de-camp, Madame Lauriston, Madame Junot and others, might reside there. While the mistress of the house was away no change was made in the ordinary daily routine. A good deal of sport was indulged in, and the evenings were spent in chatting and card-play-

ing. As everyone at La Malmaison was young there was plenty of gaiety; it appears indeed that Bonaparte was never so gay, never so good-tempered as during his wife's absence on this occasion. He was always in a capital humour, laughing and bandying jokes with the young women, rushing about playing with them on the lawn. In the evening he made them recite poetry, and then they would sit down at a large green table, where he played with enthusiasm and cheated with all his might. To put it briefly, they were all as happy as the days were long. The husbands, whose work took them to Paris, came almost every evening to see their wives and left again after dinner. It was indeed so much honeymooning—the honeymoon of Consular France into the bargain.

One morning Madame Junot was sleeping soundly, like young people of twenty can sleep, when a sudden knock—not at the door but by her bedside—woke her with a start, and great was her amazement to see no less a person than the Chief Consul himself. She thought she must be dreaming and rubbed her eyes, not knowing whether she ought to laugh or be angry at such manners, when Bonaparte began to laugh heartily himself.

"Well, Madame Junot, why this air of astonishment? It is I, in the flesh."

The weather being hot, Madame Junot had slept with her window open. She stretched her arms out towards the window, through which the sky was visible, aglow with that deep translucent azure that is ever the forerunner of a fine summer's day. The air was as clear as crystal, and the tree-tops, untouched as yet

by the rays of the rising sun, still retained the dusky shadows of departing night. Glancing at her watch to see the time, she held it up to the Consul.

"What, only five o'clock!" said he. "I should not have believed it. But so much the better; we'll have a chat."

And without more ado he took an arm-chair at the foot of the bed, and made himself as much at home as if he had been in his own room. He had a great bundle of letters under his arm which he calmly began to open.

"But," said Madame Junot as she saw him opening the envelopes, "why do you perform such a wearisome task yourself? Have you not got Bourrienne and his staff to do it for you?"

"Later on perhaps I may depute it to others, but at present it is impossible. Now, when order is only just beginning to be restored, I cannot afford to ignore a single grievance, a solitary claim."

These the Duchess d'Abrantès affirms were the Consul's *ipsissima verba*.

And so he went through his correspondence, sometimes muttering a remark under his breath, sometimes saying a few words to Madame Junot, jotting down notes on some letters, tearing up others, but apparently much pleased at discharging these routine duties in a room with a young woman lying in bed before him.

"Ah," said he all of a sudden, "here's a trap!" and he tore open one, two, three, four envelopes, on each of which were inscribed the words "To the Chief Consul only; to be delivered into his hands." He became impatient at seeing so many envelopes, and said with

a little comic rebellious air, seeming to be speaking to the letter, "Well, here you are, I am the man, and as for my hands"—and he turned them about and looked at them with complacent satisfaction—"I hope they are clean enough."[1]

At length the last envelope was torn open and thrown away. A dainty feminine perfume, or rather the odour of a dainty coquette, seemed to exhale from these papers, which greatly puzzled Madame Junot. She took one of the envelopes, and as she raised it to her nose observed that the superscription was in a woman's handwriting, whereat Bonaparte burst out into one of those high-strung laughs of his which never failed to excite fear or curiosity in those who heard it.

"It is a declaration," he said, "not of war but of love. The writer is a beautiful lady who according to her statement has loved me ever since the day she saw me hand the Treaty of Peace of Campo Formio to the Directory. If I wish to see her I have only to give orders to the sentry on duty at the Bougival gate to admit a woman dressed in white who will give the word *Napoléon*. And that," he added, looking at the date of the letter, "from to-night onwards."

"Gracious heavens," cried Madame Junot, "do not go whatever you do. It would be an act of the greatest imprudence."

Bonaparte turned a singular look on her.

"What can it matter to you," he said, "whether I go or whether I do not go to this rendezvous?"

[1] It is impossible to render this passage satisfactorily in English as it involves a play upon the expressions *propres mains* (one's own hands) and *mains propres* (clean hands).—*Translator's note.*

"What can it matter? Why, suppose it is a trap. There are so many evil characters abroad just now."

The Consul was still gazing at her with an inscrutable, almost sardonic, expression.

"I merely said it for a joke," he replied. "Do you think I should be such a simpleton, such a fool as to be caught by a bait like that? Only think, I receive letters of that kind every day proposing rendezvous, sometimes at the Tuileries, sometimes at the Luxembourg, but the only reply I vouchsafe to these delightful missives, and the only one they deserve is this"—and he wrote across the letter—"To be forwarded to the Commissioner of Police."

At this moment the clock at Reuil struck six.

"The deuce!" exclaimed the Chief Consul, "there's six o'clock going. Good-bye, Madame Junot."

He went to the bed, gathered up his papers, pinched Madame Junot's foot through the bedclothes and then bestowing a most gracious smile on her as if to solicit pardon for this liberty he went away humming an air. The young woman, astonished at such familiarity, listened to him as he went murdering with that harsh untuneful voice of his a song which he always used to sing when he was very pleased, and which he embellished with additions of his own that set all grammar at defiance.

Non, non *s'il* est impossible
D'avoir un plus aimable enfant.
Un plus aimable? Ah! si vraiment, etc.

It was, it seems, his favourite ditty, though he never produced it save on special occasions, that is to say when he was on very good terms with himself.

Madame Junot was comforted by the reflexion that this incautious visit had not after all led the Chief Consul into any very serious indiscretion, and she employed the day in those trifling occupations which, without wearying one, serve to while away the time. When evening came, the General, who wished to get to the bottom of her reason for not wanting him to keep the appointment referred to in the scented letter of the morning, drew near her and said in a whisper—

"I am going to the Bougival gate."

Madame Junot uttered a cry, but after teasing her a little the Chief Consul, giving her one of those enigmatical glances of his, left her and went into the billiard-room.

The next morning Madame Junot was again sound asleep when she was aroused by the same noise as on the previous morning. It was the Chief Consul once more. There he was, standing with a bundle of letters and newspapers under his arm. He did not even think of excusing the great liberty which he—a young man of thirty-two or thirty-three—was taking in penetrating by stealth into the bedroom of a girl of twenty.

"I see you sleep with your window open, Madame Junot"; said he, "it is fatal for such women as you who have teeth like pearls. You should never risk spoiling your teeth. They are just like your mother's; real little pearls."

Then as before he took a seat, crossed his legs, which in those days had little flesh on them, and began to unfold his papers and open his letters, murmuring his comments *sotto voce*. Then he discussed some popular scandal of the day, delivered himself of

sundry aphorisms on various subjects and finally got up, gave another pinch through the bedclothes to Madame Junot's toes and took his departure. Pleased apparently with his early morning's occupation, he went off singing in harsh discordant tones his everlasting refrain :—

Non, non, *s'il* est impossible, etc.

This time it dawned on Madame Junot that there was something decidedly questionable about these early visits and calling her maid she told her on no account to open the door to anyone at such an hour, no matter who it might be.

"But, Madame, suppose it is the Chief Consul?" said the woman.

"Well, refuse admittance to him or anyone else."

The day passed off in the usual manner. They went for a drive to Le Butard, when Napoleon found an opportunity to pay Madame Junot a compliment, and a fairly lengthy one too, on her courage.

As Bonaparte was not accustomed to pay compliments, still less elaborate ones, the company present pricked up their ears and began to ask themselves whether there was not some truth in the report that little Madame Junot was in high favour with the First Consul, and in the stories that were being hawked about by *femmes de chambre* to the effect that Bonaparte had been seen coming out of her room at six o'clock in the morning. All these compliments made it look as if there were.

When they reached Le Butard, the Chief Consul said—

"I want you to come and have luncheon here the day after to-morrow, and we will do a little shooting before and after. It will do me good, and it will be some amusement for all of us. Be here then on Tuesday at ten o'clock."

The outing went off without incident. On getting home again Napoleon shut himself up in his study and did not even leave it for dinner.

Madame Junot, when undressing that evening, again impressed on her maid that she was to suffer no one to enter at such an early hour, and she then got into bed. But she was troubled by some indefinable anxiety, and kept asking herself what construction the Consul would put upon her action in thus excluding him. She was haunted by the fear of wounding him and was unable to sleep. On the other hand, she could not see how she could with any propriety receive General Bonaparte when she was alone in bed, and at such an hour. He was quite a young man, and it was pretty well known that he did not set himself up as a model of conjugal fidelity, and Madame Junot was anxious not to give a handle to slander by deliberately setting appearances against her. She knew well enough how people got wind of things at La Malmaison, and that its charitable inhabitants would not be slow to magnify everything to her disadvantage. After all, what could possibly possess the Consul to visit her so early, what earthly motive could he have? Was he really in love with her? Was he only waiting for a convenient opportunity of giving effect to some sinister design? Perhaps he thought that the opportunity would be most likely to present

itself on one of those radiant, intoxicating summer mornings. She remembered too how he had told the Conseil d'État that adultery was simply *une affaire de canapé*. But no, the Chief Consul could never entertain such an idea, never, never, she repeated to herself, as if to gain assurance from the reiteration. He had known her as a child, he had dandled her on his knee, and was almost like a brother to her. Besides, was she not a married woman, did not her husband love her better than anyone else, and was he not ready to lay down his life for her sake? Was it credible that the Consul was casting about to play him false—his good and trusty Junot—to filch away his wife from him? No, she told herself, such an idea was utterly out of the question. She had been giving her imagination too much rein, she had been making a mountain out of a molehill. What was it but a trifling liberty, quite excusable under the circumstances, in a country house, and really not worth worrying about.

Had he up to the present been guilty of any breach of decorum towards her? As for his coming into her room in the morning, was it not just a natural and harmless way of seeking some relief from the worries of affairs of State? Was it anything more than a piece of *camaraderie*, his coming to read over his letters in company with one whom he had known from a child, with the wife of his favourite aide-de-camp? What nonsensical ideas had she been weaving for herself? True, he had pinched her foot as he went out, but that was a familiarity that was innocent enough.

But it was in vain for Madame Junot to reason thus with herself; she did not succeed in bringing conviction

to her mind. She was still worried and anxious. Sometimes she would be seized with a mad desire to rush away to her husband in Paris—for she loved her husband dearly. They were still in the honeymoon stage, and how pleased Junot would be to see his little wife, his Laurette, appear unexpectedly and to hear her say, "Here I am, I have come; I could not rest another moment without seeing you—I love you so much!"

But it was madness to think of that. As for her husband, she would be seeing him in a few days; could she not wait a little longer? Clearly peace of mind was out of the question with a restless imagination like hers!

She was downhearted and unable to sleep. The whole thing put her in a fever. A vague idea of some impending calamity oppressed her. She sobbed all night long and thought of all kinds of terrible things. At last, from very weariness, she fell asleep, but the first gleams of dawn awakened her. She thought she heard a noise, but it was nothing but her woman breathing heavily in the next room.

It suddenly occurred to her that perhaps the servant would not dare to refuse admittance to the Consul, so she got out of bed to take the key out of the door, because she had absolutely made up her mind to put an end to these ill-timed visits. Judge then of her amazement, and of her anger also, when she found that the key was on the outside of the door. She said nothing, however, but noiselessly opened the door, and after having double-locked it on the inside, she took away the key altogether. Then, her mind at rest, she got into bed again.

But was her mind at rest? To tell the truth, it was not. She trembled for the moment when Bonaparte should come, for come she felt sure he would. How her pulses throbbed! Suddenly, about six o'clock, she heard the Consul's footsteps along the corridor. In an agony of suspense she heard them stop outside her door; there came a knock, and then another. The maid said something in an undertone, doubtless to explain that she had nothing to do with the removal of the key. Then she heard footsteps once more. Soon they died away in the distance; the General had gone away again.

Madame Junot's uneasiness did not depart with him. Her tears began to flow. She wept to think that she had perhaps committed a foolish act, that the Consul would be hurt at the mistrust she had manifested in removing her key, and that his visits might after all be very harmless. He was probably guilty of none of the unspeakable designs with which she had credited him, though her procedure was tantamount to reproaching him with them when quite possibly he only came to snatch a few minutes' chat with her before resuming the burden of the day's work. At last she grew weary of thinking about this foolish affair and was beginning to fall asleep again when her door opened and the Chief Consul entered! How he had managed to get in Madame Junot had not time to reflect.

"Are you afraid of being murdered?" said Bonaparte, in acrid sibilant tones.

The young woman, who was not easily cowed, was nettled at the harshness of such a sudden exordium.

She answered that being unwilling that anyone should pass through her maid's room to get to hers she had taken the key out of the door. This was not the real reason, but in the face of this fiend of a man she dared not tell the truth; and therein she was wrong.

Bonaparte looked at her sternly but made no answer. At length he said, "To-morrow is our expedition to Le Butard; you have not forgotten it since yesterday evening, I suppose? We will start early, and in order that you may be ready I will come and call you myself. And, as you are not among a horde of brigands here, don't barricade your door in this manner. Besides, you see that your precautions have not had the effect of preventing an old friend from getting to you. Adieu."

It appeared that this time he was not pleased, for he did not sing as he went away. Another who certainly was not pleased was Madame Junot. All the domestics must have observed the General as he left the room—what a lot of cackling there would be! Already, the previous day, she had had an opportunity of noticing the envious looks of some of the women and the too indulgent glances of others, and there was no doubt in her mind as to the sort of stories that were going the round about her. But now, gracious goodness, what would they not be saying? The puzzle was, how had Bonaparte entered? But the solution was simple enough, more simple than creditable, to be sure. He had a duplicate key in his possession—that was all, and the maid had not had the courage to say him nay.

All that set Madame Junot thinking more than ever. She felt hurt by such conduct on the part of the Consul, and still more by his brutal method of effecting an entrance by means of a duplicate key. A false key! clearly she ought not to stop another day in a house where the sacred laws of hospitality were thus disregarded. But the problem was to get away. She thought and thought, but all in vain; she could devise no plan that would enable her to take her departure without creating a stir. There were a host of difficulties in the way with regard to the Consul, Madame Louis, Junot and all the rest. Despairing of finding a way out of her dilemma, the poor little woman burst into tears, the supreme resource of her sex, when the door once more flew open and a man gaily entered the room. This time it was Junot.

Junot! . . . . Then she was saved. She explained to him that she was crying because it was such a long time since she had seen him, and Junot, like the good husband he was, had no difficulty in crediting a statement so flattering to his vanity. When evening came, his wife, who had strongly made up her mind on the matter, persuaded and cajoled him into stopping the night with her. Junot was at that time Governor of Paris and could not absent himself from the capital without the express permission of the Consul. Nevertheless he yielded to his wife's entreaties and stayed at La Malmaison.

Next morning the church clock at Reuil had just struck five and the crowing cocks gaily bore witness that the timepiece was not out of its reckoning, when suddenly Madame Junot, who was awake, heard steps

echoing at the other end of the corridor. They came nearer and nearer and then stopped at her door. A key turned in the lock, the door opened and the Chief Consul noisily entered.

"What! still asleep Madame Junot when we've got a day's shooting before us. I told you particularly that . . ."

It would be difficult to depict the look of utter amazement that appeared on the General's face when he perceived a man's head on the pillow by the side of Madame Junot's, and recognised his worthy Junot. His face fell and he was completely nonplussed, while Junot who had woke up was just as thunderstruck as Napoleon.

"Hullo, General," he said, "what brings you into the women's quarters at this time in the morning?"

"I came to call Madame Junot to go shooting with me," answered the Chief Consul in the same tone, "but I see she has a *réveille-matin* still earlier than myself. I ought perhaps to find fault Monsieur Junot, for as a matter of fact you have no business to be here."

The Chief Consul, who had still less business to be there, had darted at Madame Junot a look that was an indescribable mixture of discomfiture, fury, and simulated good humour, and it was this simulated good humour which characterised the little dialogue which we give below, transcribed word for word by the Duchesse d'Abrantès.

"General," answered Junot, "if ever fault merited forgiveness, mine does. Had you but seen this little sorceress last night weaving all the spells at her com-

mand to lead me astray, I believe you would grant me your pardon."

The Chief Consul smiled, but his smile was clearly a forced one.

"I absolve you then entirely; Madame Junot shall receive the punishment"—and he laughed, but his laughter had no mirth in it.

"To prove that I am not angry with you I will allow you to join our shooting party. Did you ride out?"

"No, General, I drove."

"Oh well, Jardin will give you a mount. Good-bye, Madame Junot. Come along, get up, and don't lose any time."[1]

So saying he left the room, and Junot, delighted to see his General in such an amiable mood, said naïvely—

"Who would not follow a man like that to the death?"

Poor fellow! little did he think that the man for whom he would have shed his blood had been trying to take his wife away from him.

The Chief Consul did not forgive Madame Junot for having thus cut short his morning visits. His vanity had received a double injury, first from the fact that he had met with a rebuff in the love-idyll he had essayed to begin, and secondly from the manner in which that rebuff had been administered. He felt himself lowered in more ways than one in the estimation of this woman who, mere girl as she was, had contrived so effectually and in so unwelcome a manner to counter his plans.

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 334.

In the course of the day's outing he most churlishly and unkindly made her aware of his displeasure. She could form an estimate from the words he let fall of the depth of his disappointment and of the scant consideration he had for a woman when he owed her a grudge.

In spite, however, of his harsh treatment of the women who resisted him, he could not help feeling a respect for them which he did not manifest towards their more easy-going sisters, though these he loaded with presents. And this is proof that he was not so utterly devoid of the moral sense as his conduct would make it appear.

During the day an explanation took place between the Chief Consul and Madame Junot. Bonaparte spoke strongly to her, even harshly, and the upshot of it all was that she said her mother was ill in Paris and required her services.

"And when will you return?" said Napoleon.

"When my duties require me General. But you may dispose of my rooms. I will never occupy them again. For that I give you my word, here and now."

"Just as you please," said the Consul; "anyhow, you are quite right in going away this morning. After all this stupid business we should not much care about seeing each other, you and I."[1]

Napoleon seems never to have forgotten the check he received at the hands of Madame Junot. He bore her a lasting grudge for it, and it is partly to this circumstance that Madame d'Abrantès attributes her husband's disgrace. But that is an error, and there is

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 335.

no necessity to ascribe it to anything else than Junot's own folly. Over and above the ill-will thus engendered, Napoleon may also have entertained a little jealousy on account of her friendship with General Duroc.

"Jealousy," as La Rochefoucauld most truly says, "is born with love but does not invariably die with it." Now, as is well known, Madame d'Abrantès was on intimate terms of friendship with the Grand Marshal of the Palace, and Napoleon, who was aware of it, not unreasonably entertained the belief that when a man shows friendship for a woman, love has usually prepared the way. One day, therefore, he took it into his head to ask Duroc point-blank if he had ever been in love with Madame Junot. Duroc merely laughed as though such a thing were quite out of the question. "That is no answer," said Napoleon impatiently, "tell me definitely, were you ever in love with her?" The Grand Marshal protested that he never had been, and remarked how strange it was, when he came to think of it, that it had never occurred to him to make love to so charming a woman. "Well," said Napoleon, "all I can say is that it is a very singular thing." "His own ideas about such matters were very remarkable," says Madame d'Abrantès, "and I believe that he was always surprised to meet with virtue in a woman."[1]

But this was no wonder considering the sort of people he had about him. There were his wife Josephine and her friends, whom he had been obliged to send about their business, his sisters, and many of the women of his court and of theirs. No, it is not

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. VIII, p. 453.

to be marvelled at that he could scarcely conceive the idea of a virtuous woman who was not either stupid, plain, ignorant, or a prude. Madame d'Abrantès, however, in spite of the fact that she did not give way to the Consul, was not altogether without reproach, and the names of the men who afterwards became her lovers are recorded in history. It is perhaps to excuse her later conduct that she somewhat ostentatiously insists on her resistance to Bonaparte. But since we have alluded to her failings, we must in justice add that the poor woman was entitled to plead many extenuating circumstances. Her husband so frequently played her false that at last she lost patience and did as the others did.

CHAPTER V

The Chief Consul at Boulogne—Madame de Rémusat and her *tête-à-têtes* with General Bonaparte—The Consul's amorous disposition—Slanderous reports—A daughter of Italy and the distraction she affords to Bonaparte—Another love story—An ephemeral fancy—Madame de Vaudey; her relations with the Emperor—Quarrel and revenge—Madame Duchâtel; her marriage; her personal appearance—Napoleon's precautions to escape observation when visiting her—Intrigues—Josephine's jealousy—Sundry interludes—A scene of jealousy at Saint-Cloud—A sudden change; the Emperor forsakes Madame Duchâtel and is reconciled to his wife—Josephine reads Madame Duchâtel a lecture.

AFTER the rupture of the Peace of Amiens, the Chief Consul had gone to inspect the troops encamped at Boulogne. He took up his quarters at Pont de Brique, where a spacious building had been specially constructed to receive him. M. de Rémusat, then Prefect of the Palace, accompanied him. This functionary, however, met with great ill-fortune, being seized with typhoid or, as it was then termed, putrid fever, almost immediately after his arrival, and his wife hurried from Paris to nurse him.

The Chief Consul had quite an exceptional regard for Madame de Rémusat. One day he had heard her, a girl of twenty, conversing about Shakespeare and English poetry in general, and had been greatly impressed by such evidence of feminine culture. The days of the Fronde, of Louis XIV, with the accom-

plished women that adorned them, had passed away and there was nothing about Madame Letitia or her daughters, despite Elisa Baciocchi's absurd literary pretensions, to modify Bonaparte's astonishment at discovering that a pretty woman was not necessarily a dunce. Being informed of Madame de Rémusat's arrival in the camp, he at once sent for her, and she, though somewhat taken aback, as speedily obeyed the summons. The General kissed her, a proceeding which in a man so little demonstrative signified no less familiarity than sympathy. He paid her a neatly turned compliment on the promptitude with which she had hastened to her husband's side and on the good influence her presence could not fail to exert on the course of the complaint. "I was looking forward to your coming," he said; "your presence will cure your husband." Madame de Rémusat, overcome with emotion, began to weep, while Bonaparte, himself touched by her soft-heartedness, made her sit down, displayed great anxiety to soothe her feelings and finally invited her to stay to lunch. The tears were dried, the conversation took a livelier turn and the Chief Consul, in a tone at once paternal and gallant, said with a laugh, "It is eminently necessary that I should keep an eye on a young woman like you, thrown in this manner amongst so many military men."[1]

It was doubtless in order the more effectually to keep an eye on her that he made her lunch and dine with him every day. He was in the habit of despatching his luncheon in a quarter of an hour, but at dinner, especially when there were no other guests,

[1] Madame de Rémusat, Vol. I, p. 265.

he extended the sitting, and gave himself up to long and intimate converse with the young woman. Then, after the manner of Madame de Longueville, who has recorded that she liked to think and make others think of her own affairs and that she preferred to talk of herself—even ill of herself rather than not talk at all—Bonaparte made himself the subject of conversation. "He expatiated on his own character, representing himself as having always been of a melancholy turn of mind.

"'When I was at the École Militaire,' he said, 'I chose a little corner where I went to dream at my ease, for I was always given to musing. . . . When I first entered the service I grew weary of garrison life. I took up novel-reading and this greatly interested me. I tried to write some stories myself, and this occupation imparted a sort of dreaminess to my imagination; it mingled with the positive knowledge that I had acquired, and often I amused myself by day-dreaming in order that I might, as it were, correct my reveries by bringing them into line with the result of my reasoning. I projected myself, in thought, into an ideal world, and endeavoured to find in what precise details it differed from the actual world in which I lived. In my early days I used to be very fond of Ossian, and this was for the same reason which led me to take pleasure in listening to the murmur of the winds and the waves of the sea.'"[1]

Those were delightful and invaluable confidences, and they should have been beyond price to a young woman of such distinguished merit, who must have

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, pp. 266–8 and 278.

divined that the Consul was making love to her. And what a love scene it was! Picture him—this young man—as he summons from the past the memories of his earliest adolescence, as he recalls those mysterious, indefinable sensations that thrilled his being when Love came to him unawares, ere yet he knew what Love was. Imagine him in the very flower of his manhood, in the full blaze of his incomparable glory, dwelling on the memories of a past that dated but from yesterday, and murmuring, when dinner was over and the restraints of convention were cast aside, his tender, dreamy reminiscences into the soft ear of a woman dowered with the triple gift of beauty, youth and wit. Was ever woman in such manner wooed?

Without doubt there was nothing more between them than what we have recounted, but the Chief Consul's officers thought differently. Being themselves men of action before everything, they could not imagine that "a woman could remain thus for hours together with their Chief constantly discussing topics of a more or less serious nature." Possibly the topics were not always quite so serious as Madame de Rémusat would have us think; at any rate it is undeniable that these prolonged conversations set people talking. The aides-de-camp and the other officers put their heads together like a parcel of women, with the result that Madame de Rémusat's reputation suffered rather severely, not only at Boulogne but in Paris, whither the tittle-tattle of the gentlemen in question had quickly arrived.

It was of no avail for Madame de Rémusat to protest that her conversations with the Chief Consul were purely and simply connected with metaphysics, science

and literature; it was in vain that she wrote "I make bold to say that the purity of my thoughts as well as my life-long affection for my husband entirely precluded me from conceiving the ideas with which I was credited in the antechamber of the Consul while I was listening to him in his salon."[1]

Protestations and deeds were alike in vain; suspicion has clung to those interviews, and slander has been pleased to believe that they were not exclusively devoted to metaphysical discussions.

The bitterness which characterises her references to Napoleon has constituted in the eyes of some people a probability or, at the very least, a strong presumption in favour of these uncharitable hypotheses; a presumption which is strengthened by the details she discloses of Napoleon's behaviour towards those with whom he was on terms of intimacy, though these details she might have obtained at second hand. It has also been rather widely commented upon that, having gone to Boulogne to nurse her husband, she should leave him to himself to go and dine and linger in conversation with Bonaparte. Her denials regarding her relations with him are not sufficiently categorical to satisfy her ill-disposed critics; and Josephine, who had been informed of the rumours that were current among the Consul's staff, readily gave them credence. "She confessed to me," says Madame de Rémusat, "that she had upbraided her husband concerning his conduct towards me, and that he had appeared to take delight in leaving her in suspense regarding his relations with me." Madame de Rémusat further states that "with-

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 281.

out being at pains to confirm whether or not my dealings with her husband at Boulogne had been such as people gave her to believe, she was sufficiently consoled by the reflexion that, in any case, they had not been of long duration."[1]

It certainly appears that there was some special bond between the Chief Consul and Madame de Rémusat; of what nature it was we cannot definitely tell. There is no doubt that she attempted to play the combined part of favourite and dictator as, a little later on, an avowed favourite, Madame Duchâtel, essayed to do; but there is also no doubt that as soon as he perceived her intentions, the Consul unhesitatingly snubbed her. Hence an ill-will that she was at no pains to conceal. This, then, is the summing-up of the story. To begin with, enthusiasm, dreams of a glorious future, hopes of enjoying the highest favour, then a rebuff, and finally hatred. But after all, how very natural her conduct was, how essentially feminine!

If, in spite of her fundamental rectitude of character, Madame Rémusat had had any false step with which to reproach herself, would she have written the following words:—"How wilt Thou receive me, O God, when I bring to the foot of Thy holy judgment seat my trembling record of a life all but barren of good works? Shall I dare to speak to Thee of those poor virtues for which the thoughtless have belauded me, knowing not that these virtues prompted no sacrifice? Shall I glory in my uprightness when Thou remindest me of the pleasant places amid which my lot was cast? . . ."

She declares then that she had been upright—and

[1] Madame de Rémusat *Mémoires*, pp. 281 and 283.

when does she make the declaration? In that hour when all pretence is cast aside, when no man offends against the Truth, in "God's Hour," as Bossuet has it. We must, then, perforce believe her.

In the camp at Boulogne the Chief Consul had some temporary relations (this time of no uncertain character) with an extremely pretty woman, an Italian by birth, who had aspired to the *honour* of offering him the means of distraction after his labours. His exalted rank forbade him to arrange these intrigues himself like any ordinary ne'er-do-well, so he had recourse to people—and Heaven knows there were enough of them at his beck and call—who were not above saving him the trouble of conducting the preliminary enquiries and negotiations. This is how he became acquainted with the Italian lady. There is nothing romantic in the story, but then minor romance has no place in the great romance of Napoleon's career. Had he time, this thunderbolt of a man, to carry on an intrigue with due observance of all the rules of the art, and patiently to await the dénouement after countless manœuvrings in the land of Dalliance? No, in love as in war, Napoleon always rushed the position.

One morning, while his valet Constant was dressing him, he happened to be talking to General Murat. The conversation took a somewhat jocular turn and Bonaparte confessed that for some time he had been heartily sick at having none but moustachioed faces about him. This, of course, was an invitation to talk about women. Constant asserts that it was not in Napoleon's disposition to entrust him with the mission of looking out for women and bringing them to him,

and he adds that if his master had done so he would have declined the task for, says he, "I was not *grand seigneur* enough to look on such an occupation as honourable."

But General Murat who as Bonaparte's brother-in-law could not have harboured the same scruples, and willingly undertook, with his wife's concurrence, the duties of purveyor to the Consular caprices, spoke to him of a young Genoese, beautiful, sparkling and witty, who was dying for an interview with "the greatest man of modern times." Bonaparte readily granted the permission on which her happiness depended, and Murat withdrew delighted at having been able to serve two people at once with so little trouble.

The Italian lady did not lose an instant in responding to Murat's summons. Immediately on her arrival at Boulogne, Murat hastened to inform his brother-in-law that this jewel of a woman was holding herself at his commands. Napoleon therefore gave orders to his valet to take a carriage as soon as it was dark and fetch General Murat's protégée. Constant disclaims all participation in missions of this kind, but he cannot disclaim having assisted, so far as his place permitted, in pandering to his master's fancies. He combined the duties of chief valet-de-chambre with the still more confidential office of introducer of female "ambassadors," and in the humble position he occupied, all he could do was to regard with kindly indulgence the great man's foibles. These foibles, however, the Chief Consul did his best to conceal. Even though "among men" he did not wish it to be

known that he was receiving a woman in his quarters. He was anxious to set an example of austerity, for any irregularities on his part might have provided many of his officers, married and unmarried, with pretexts for unlimited gadding about. A loose state of morals would have weakened and sapped the strength of the army, and it was his object to maintain in a perfect state of efficiency the wonderful piece of mechanism which he was welding together by his own efforts, and which is known in history under the title of the Grand Army.

Thus, although the night was as dark as could be, Constant received orders to introduce the fair Italian by the garden gate behind the Consular buildings. The woman's conduct with regard to General Bonaparte certainly betokened a good deal of assurance. On arriving, however, her emotion was so great that she burst into tears. Affected or real, the circumstance evoked the Consul's compassion, for he never could endure seeing a woman in tears without making an effort to comfort her. Perceiving how warmly she was welcomed she quickly dried her eyes, and was apparently delighted with the General's society, for it was not until three in the morning that Bonaparte rang for Constant to have her taken home. The Chief Consul, too, must have found the *tête-à-tête* considerably to his liking, for he made her come again four or five times, and saw her subsequently at Rambouillet when he was Emperor.

The trusty, or rather the indiscreet, valet-de-chambre informs us that "she was kind-hearted, guileless, credulous, and quite undesigning, and made not the

smallest attempt to make capital out of her *liaison* which, after all, was purely ephemeral."[1]

Constant mentions "another of those 'favourites of a moment' who, as it were, cast themselves into the Emperor's arms without giving him time to pay his court to them. "Mademoiselle L. B——" he says "was strikingly good-looking, possessing exceptional qualities, both of mind and heart, and if her bringing-up had been of a less frivolous description she would doubtless have proved an estimable woman. But I have every reason to believe that it had always been her mother's plan to procure a protector in place of a second husband by utilising her daughter's youth and beauty to this end. I forget the name of the protector in question, but he belonged to a noble family, a circumstance on which both mother and daughter warmly congratulated themselves. The young woman was a good musician and sang agreeably, but what struck me as being just as ridiculous as it was unbecoming was her dancing before a number of guests at her mother's house in a costume as scanty as an Opera dancer's, with castanets or a tambourine in her hand, and finishing her performance with a display of airs and graces. With such an education as that, it was natural that she should see nothing strange in her position, and she was consequently greatly mortified at the brief duration of her intrigue with the Emperor. As for the mother, she was in despair about it, and said to me with revolting candour, 'Just look at my poor Lise, how flushed she is. It is nothing but grief at finding herself neglected, poor dear child. How kind

[1] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, pp. 48–51.

it would be of you if you could but arrange that he should ask to see her.' In order to bring about an interview which mother and daughter had so much at heart they went to Mass at St. Cloud, where 'poor' Lise ogled the Emperor in such a manner as to bring a blush to the cheeks of the young women who beheld her. But it was all time wasted so far as the Emperor was concerned, for he paid not the slightest attention."[1]

The rigid Constant, who prides himself on never having compromised his dignity by mixing himself up in his master's love affairs—and seeing the universal corruption which surrounded him his conduct deserves some praise—was by no means such a stickler for good morals in the people with whom he mixed, since this very woman, who was quite ready to sell her daughter to Napoleon, was a friend of his.

It appears that numerous applications were made through Constant to the Emperor which had reference, not to requests for administrative or military advancement, but to affairs of gallantry. "I never wished," he affirms once more, "to have anything to do with matters of that sort. I cannot, however, be blamed for having been indirectly sounded or even openly solicited by certain women who aspired to the title of favourite, though the rights and privileges which such a position carried with it in the Emperor's eyes were few enough. But I repeat that I always held aloof from such bargainings and contented myself with attending to the duties which my position imposed upon me, and to nothing else; and although His

[1] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 51.

Majesty was pleased to restore the usages of the monarchy, the secret prerogatives of the first valet-de-chambre were not revived, and I took good care to lay no claim to them. There were plenty of others (not valets-de-chambre) who were less scrupulous than I. General L—— spoke to the Emperor about a very pretty young woman whose mother kept a gaming house, and who was anxious to be presented to him. The Emperor received her once, and a few days afterwards she was married. Some time later His Majesty wished to renew her acquaintance, and asked for her, but she replied that she was no longer her own mistress, and turned a deaf ear to every appeal and every offer that were made to her. The Emperor did not appear in any way displeased thereat. On the contrary, he praised Madame D—— for her loyalty to duty, and expressed strong approval of her conduct."[1]

But this passing fancy which Constant speaks of, and of which we possess no further details than those furnished by this talkative valet-de-chambre, has hurried us on a little too far, and we must now retrace our steps.

Napoleon, who had just had himself proclaimed Emperor, set out in great state on a journey along the banks of the Rhine. The Empress accompanied the party, and took with her some of the members of her household. Among the ladies selected to attend her was Madame de Vaudey, who had only quite recently received her appointment. "She had been made *dame du palais*, Heaven only knows how or wherefore. This was another of those appointments which the

[1] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 47.

Empress worried the Emperor into granting. He no doubt signed it merely because he was sick of the business, for three months later it became necessary to make a further change." [1]

Madame de Vaudey, it appears, was a very attractive woman, tall, which does not always mean well-proportioned, and gifted with such a fund of self-confidence that it would hardly have been charitable to have wished her any more of it. This quality enabled her to make the most of her beauty, which of itself, perhaps, would have been of no very great account. It is the most likely thing in the world that she did not wait for the Emperor to deign to notice her, but that she herself knew well how to attract his attention. She was perfectly aware—indeed, it is the very A B C of the art of coquetry—that a man can rarely resist a compliment, particularly when it proceeds from a pair of pretty lips. In this regard Napoleon was no wiser than the rest, and his marriage (which is the proof of it) had not yet opened his eyes to a stratagem so ordinary and yet so popular among coquettes. In addition to this, his vanity, which had already been flattered by his marriage with a Vicomtesse,[2] derived further satisfaction from an intrigue with a woman of title, a woman of the Faubourg St. Germain clique. In short, it was no long time before he took this schemer for his mistress.

Her sole motive in soliciting the post of *dame du palais* was to extricate herself from the poverty in which

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. VI, p. 239.

[2] General Bonaparte considered himself greatly honoured by this union, and greatly prided himself upon it (Duc de Raguse, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 95).

she had been forced to dwell since the Revolution, and seeming to see in the favour of the Emperor a means of repairing her shattered fortunes and at the same time of enjoying the lofty consideration which under the monarchy attached to the ignoble position of a royal mistress, she was desirous of carrying things with a high hand. Not content to wait until the Emperor indemnified her for her services, she made a direct appeal to him for money. She was a woman who, over and above her fondness for luxury and wild extravagance so characteristic of the *ancien régime*, was possessed of an inordinate passion for play. She invariably carried a pack of cards in her pocket, and when on duty at the Tuileries she put herself in the way of the officers and aides-de-camp, and compelled them to play a game or two with her in the waiting-rooms, and even in the very antechambers. Stools, forms, anything would be made to answer the purpose of a table, and as often as not her lap took the place of the cloth of green.

The Emperor got to know of this inveterate failing of his latest conquest; Josephine in her jealousy doubtless revealed it to him. He immediately instructed the Grand Marshal of the Palace to give orders that, for the future, his antechambers were not to be turned into gambling dens. Madame de Vaudey made the best of it and extracted no more cards from her pocket when on duty, though she did continue to extract all the profit possible from her position of favourite. Devoid of every semblance of a scruple, and deeming that the Emperor (who, as a matter of fact, was very generous towards his mistresses) did not

remunerate the favours she granted him on a scale worthy of him, or rather of herself, she took it into her head one day to write to him for a sum of fifty thousand francs. It was shortly after the return from the Rhine journey. She had, she said, an urgent need of the sum; she wanted it to pay a debt which her ill-fated passion for gambling had led her to incur. She added, in high-flown language, that a woman who possessed her sacred regard for honour had but two alternatives open to her, which were to settle the debt within twenty-four hours or to die; that knowing His Majesty's generous heart she did not hesitate to appeal to him, never for a moment doubting that once again he would prove her salvation. She further added that, if she did not receive the money, she had made up her mind to poison or asphyxiate herself without delay—indeed, for all we know she may have told him she had already done so.

The Emperor, who was always the dupe of women of this description, readily absorbed her ladyship's story. Greatly alarmed at what might befall the unhappy woman as a result of her having been temporarily carried away by her passion for gambling, he summoned his aide-de-camp and, briefly explaining to him the position, gave him fifty thousand francs and told him to settle the matter, urging him not to lose a moment, as no one ever knew what might happen to a demon of a woman like that.

Madame de Vaudey lived in a pretty house at Auteuil. Rapp drove off in a carriage, and asking for the 'dame du palais,' was ushered into a drawing-room where a dozen people were seated round a card-

table and appeared to be hugely enjoying themselves. Madame de Vaudey, most elegantly attired, was presiding with no less gaiety at a game of faro, and looked anything rather than a woman who had made up her mind to cut short a life which afforded her so much delight.

When, however, the general arrived in the full dress of an officer on duty, epaulettes, gorget and all, dismay fell upon the company. The jokes and the laughter suddenly ceased. Madame de Vaudey, guessing the business of the Emperor's aide-de-camp, took him aside and explained as best she could the debt she had spoken about to His Majesty and the merry gathering he had found there. Rapp was not in the least taken in by her laboured excuses and reported what he had witnessed to the Emperor. Napoleon was utterly dumbfounded at such unblushing impudence and at once wrote Madame de Vaudey a letter as brief as it was to the point, ordering her to send in her resignation at once. He did not wish to dismiss her, on account of the scandal that such a proceeding would entail, but as she had connexions in the Faubourg St. Germain he thought that her resignation would naturally be attributed to political motives and pass unnoticed.

Madame de Vaudey, furious at this exposure, never forgave the Emperor a decision which so rudely put an end alike to her income and her hopes. She conceived a positively Corsican hatred for him, a hatred which engrossed all her faculties. Henceforth the whole of her life was occupied with one absorbing idea —vengeance. Wherever she went she did her utmost

to blacken his character, but she soon found mere words insufficient. Being unable to reach the ears of everybody she set to work to write her Memoirs, into which she poured her vitriolic abuse of Napoleon. She managed to get them brought to the Emperor's notice by a *femme de chambre.* Napoleon was anything but sorry, when he read them, that he had dismissed a woman capable of such colossal impudence. He happened to mislay a part of the Memoirs, and it was this portion which Constant subsequently found and which is included—for what reason we know not—in his own Memoirs.

But Madame de Vaudey was not content with having libelled her former lover. When the evil days dawned for the Empire she conceived the idea of killing him. It was her own particular way of showing gratitude for the benefits he had bestowed on her. She therefore betook herself to M. de Polignac and laid before him the praiseworthy means she had discovered of setting matters right for the Bourbons, and wound up by asking him to supply her with funds for her journey and for the purchase of a post-chaise which would be necessary in order to pursue the usurper. M. de Polignac treated the proposal of this dangerous lunatic as it deserved, and Madame de Vaudey was able later on to console herself for the miscarriage of her homicidal and other plans by reflecting that her enemy was a prisoner on St. Helena for the rest of his days.

But this adventure did not in any way cure the Emperor of carrying on intrigues with Josephine's ladies-in-waiting or with her *lectrices.* He had a whole

herd of such creatures within his reach and had only to make his choice. They were convenient love affairs those, and in availing himself of them he adopted the line of least resistance.

A man does not love twice in a lifetime like Napoleon had loved Josephine. The older a man grows the fewer illusions he retains and the weaker becomes the faculty of loving. Every atom of sentiment, of love that Napoleon had had in his heart seemed now to be exhausted, for love played no part in the flirtations which formed his everyday fare, to the great detriment of his mind and labours, for which he needed rather to bathe his spirit in the refreshing influences of pure and chaste domestic surroundings. What moralist was it who said that the strength and elevation of a man's thoughts are mysteriously and indissolubly connected with moral purity? Such an idea seems never to have occurred to Napoleon who, if he had banished every grain of sentiment from his existence, still harboured his sensual appetites. So far, however, as outward appearances were concerned his way of life appeared regular and "he shared his wife's bed."[1] She upbraided him from time to time, justly or unjustly, when her jealousy was more than usually excited, but Bonaparte explained matters and defended his actions, and then their intimacy would be renewed and no trace be left of the violent tempest that had so rudely shaken it.

All of a sudden a fancy for one of the ladies-in-waiting dominated for a time the Emperor's masterful spirit. It was a fancy of a more serious nature than

[1] Bourrienne, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 328.

any of its forerunners and he took immense pains to keep it secret.

One of the latest additions to the charming company of Josephine's ladies was a certain Madame Duchâtel, a young woman who had only recently been married. Her husband, who was already well on in years (he was in fact old enough to be her father), was a member of the Conseil d'État as well as *Directeur Général de l'Enregistrement.* Ill-assorted unions such as this were but another characteristic of upper-class life under the *ancien régime.* The Revolution had failed to put an end to them and such is the influence of a bad example, particularly when that example is set by the aristocracy, that the middle classes had to some extent adopted the practice. In this species of alliance the husband gave one a name, wealth and a good position in life, and for a time he passed muster well enough till the discovery was made that he was not satisfactory at all, or rather that he could not be. This meant trouble in the establishment. And then one fine day the young wife would choose a lover, and lo—things went on swimmingly again. Monsieur Duchâtel had had the good taste not to put himself too prominently in evidence and quite recognised that his age prevented him from being too exacting. "You may do what you like," said your gentleman of the *ancien régime* to his bride on their wedding-day, "you may do what you like so that you steer clear of princes and footmen." But Monsieur Duchâtel, who was a very model of honour and dignity, would never have dreamed of speaking thus to his young wife and there was certainly no understanding between

them, not even a tacit one, on the score of "Princes." He loved his wife and therefore it followed that he respected and trusted her. On all three points he made a mistake, but happily for him he never knew it.

Everything leads us to suppose that Madame Duchâtel lived on good terms with her husband; not that there was any great merit in that, for with their different occupations they saw so little of each other. She apparently saw more of the Emperor who, with those falcon's eyes of his, had been quick to notice a face so refined and so full of character. Her mission in life was to please. Dowered by Nature with rare loveliness, she knew how to set it off to the best advantage, and, as Brantôme would have said, was regarded as leading the squadron of contemporary beauties. Her features had a haughty, almost disdainful expression; her teeth were fine and she knew how to display them; her nose was of the aquiline description and was sufficiently self-assertive without any efforts on the part of its owner. There was, too, "an irresistible charm in the lingering glance which, when she would fain appear sweet and gentle, shone through the long lashes of her deep blue eyes."[1] For "her eyes were capable of every expression she wished them to convey save only that of frankness, for her environment and disposition naturally prompted her to dissemble."[2] Finally, she carried herself most elegantly and her figure, though inclined to be spare, betrayed distinction in every line.

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Histoire des salons de Paris*, Vol. III, p. 354; *Mémoires*, Vol. V, pp. 107 and 170.

[2] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 101.

All these advantages did not fail to produce uneasiness in the mind of the Empress. Her suspicions were ever on the alert and she listened jealously even to the most trifling observations addressed by the Emperor to her women. She made no secret of her apprehensions to her husband, who laughed at her and did his best to remove these conjugal misgivings. But the Emperor saw clearly that Josephine did not trust him and from that time forth he used every device in his power to conceal his liking for Madame Duchâtel and the *liaison* which immediately resulted from it, for he had carried the position at the first assault. As for Josephine she set all her spies to work to try to take her husband unawares.

This time Napoleon had fallen in love in real earnest. He was like a schoolboy carrying on a first intrigue with a *femme de chambre* and trying to keep the matter dark from his parents. "He used to wait," so Constant says, "till everyone in the château was asleep before he joined his mistress, and so great was his precaution that he went from his rooms to hers in his night attire with neither shoes nor slippers on his feet. Once, day began to break before he had got back to his room and apprehending a scandal I went, in accordance with the orders the Chief Consul himself had given me in case such a thing should happen, to tell Madame D——'s maid how matters were, in order that she might go and inform her mistress what time it was. Scarcely five minutes after I had taken this prudential measure, I saw the Chief Consul come back in a state of considerable agitation of which I soon learnt the cause. He had seen one of Madame Bona-

parte's women watching him through the window of a room looking on to the corridor. The Chief Consul after delivering himself of a vigorous tirade against feminine curiosity, sent me to tell the young scout of the hostile camp to hold her tongue unless she wished to be turned out neck and crop, and to warn her never to do such a thing again. I do not know whether he added to these redoubtable threats any other more gentle persuasive calculated to *purchase* the silence of the inquisitive one, but whether it was a case of a tip or of fear, she had the sense not to breathe a word."[1]

It was as a result of this disagreeable alarm that Napoleon, perceiving the justice of La Fontaine's saying

. . . fi du plaisir
Que la crainte peut corrompre!

ordered his faithful valet to renew in his own or some imaginary name the tenancy of the little house in the Allée des Veuves, Champs Élysées, where he had received Mademoiselle Georges; and there Madame Duchâtel and the Consul met from time to time.

But this little device did not pass unnoticed, and if Josephine's maid who had discovered the secret of the two lovers had had the marvellous good sense to keep it to herself, there were others, not *femmes de chambre*, but *femmes d'antichambre*, with eyes as keen and tongues less kind. These worthy souls had no compunction in telling Josephine that her husband seemed to have made a favourite of one of her ladies, but as they had not the courage to particularise they

[1] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 84.

pretended they knew nothing definite but merely that the rumour was extant.

As for Josephine, she knew perfectly well that her husband was not a model of what a faithful spouse should be, especially since the journey to Fontainebleau to receive the Pope. But, curiosity adding fuel to her jealousy, she was dying to know which of her ladies it was that had appropriated her husband's affection. Could it be Madame Duchâtel? Certainly she was pretty enough to attract Napoleon's regard, but Eugène was in love with her and she was probably too busy returning his attentions, or manœuvring to avoid them for suspicion to attach to her. And then that great headstrong Murat, had not he also taken it into his head to conceive a liking for her? For it was a fact that for some time past that egregious individual had been flirting most outrageously with Madame Duchâtel, while his wife, who was one of her bosom friends, was quite blind to it.

No, assuredly it could not be Madame Duchâtel who had taken her fickle husband's fancy. But he must be watched and she must find out the woman with whom he talked most frequently. Josephine therefore kept an eye on him and thought at first that it was Marshal Ney's young wife to whom he was most attentive. There was no doubt about it; she was the culprit. And so she behaved most coldly towards her, never saying a word to her and making her feel most cruelly the disfavour into which she had fallen.

The poor Maréchale, who had not and never had

anything of the kind on her conscience, was totally unable to account for such harshness and was excessively miserable about it. Nor was the Empress entirely happy. She tearfully betook herself to her daughter. "Can you believe it?" she said. "To think that this little Auguié to whom you were so good at Saint-Germain and for whom I myself have done so much should play me false like this! Heavens, who is to be trusted after that?" Thereupon the poor woman wept her utmost and, as we know, she was no indifferent performer where weeping was concerned. Hortense comforted her mother as a mother would comfort her child. She questioned Madame Ney and immediately satisfied herself that the Empress was on the wrong track. It was perfectly true that the Emperor had appeared to be interested in the Maréchale, but there was nothing really in it. Besides, he frightened her. She had only replied with a shy and awkward "Yes" or "No" to his observations. All the same, this had been sufficient to set people talking in this pestilential gossiping place, since, besides the anxiety she had unwittingly caused her kind mistress, she had received the ironical congratulations of Madame Duchâtel on the brilliant conquest she had effected.

Madame Duchâtel and her congratulations! Ah! there was a ray of light on the matter! Suppose in order to put people off the scent she had . . . Yes, she was quite capable of it, with her languishing looks and her air of sweet innocence. And then this intimacy with Murat—pshaw! It was not likely that Caroline would be such a born fool as to let her

husband carry on like that and actually remain friends with her rival. It was all very shady, or rather it was all too clear. And that great blockhead of a Eugène, what was his part in all this complicated conspiracy? Oh! it was evidently Madame Duchâtel who needed watching, and it was therefore on her that Madame Bonaparte concentrated her attention. To begin with, she noticed how very deferential the Grand Marshal was towards the lady. That was an important sign, and Josephine with all a jealous woman's intuition deduced from it, if not the certainty, at all events the probability that her suspicions were well founded. She guessed that it was Murat who carried the messages and missives from the Emperor and that it was Madame Murat who lent her house and good offices for the lovers' meetings. As for the poor innocent Eugène, he was a tool in their hands and never had the slightest idea that Madame Duchâtel only pretended to encourage him in order to divert suspicion, making him play the "chandelier," as they used to say in those days.

Such was the plot which the Empress succeeded in unravelling despite her limited intelligence. In order to put her off the scent, her husband made more fuss of her than ever. He used to take her to the theatre where they had a little box to themselves, he visited her rooms more often, remained longer talking with her and was more gay than usual.

By a seemingly strange contradiction, it was this very gaiety, this very recrudescence of the outer marks of affection in her husband, that proved too much for the Empress's patience; she divined what was at the

bottom of it all. She endeavoured to make him feel her annoyance, and the Emperor lost his temper and told her there was no living with her. Then followed outbreaks of weeping and he went off in high displeasure.

In the evening it was the Emperor's custom to seat himself at a card-table, and he chose Madame Murat, Madame de Rémusat and Madame Duchâtel to make up the game. This was a rule that scarcely ever varied. He did not look at his cards, but gazed stealthily at the Empress while she, seated at the other end of the salon, did her utmost to keep him under continual observation. He would enter on never-ending dissertations about love, propounding the most unexpected ideas and extraordinary theories of which he seemed to have an inexhaustible supply. In this manner he not only amused himself but afforded the utmost amusement to his fair listeners. The subject of love naturally suggested that of jealousy, and his pretty partners had too much wit to miss the application of his innuendoes.

Here Napoleon was in the wrong. He ought never to have made his wife a laughing-stock before his mistress. But then the latter's triumph would not have been complete had he not humiliated his lawful wife before her. Therein Napoleon resembled the generality of men; side by side with his prodigious genius he exhibited some very commonplace failings. To gratify the favourite of the moment he would be willing to sacrifice his wife who now appeared to love him dearly. He forgot that there are no wounds so cruel as those inflicted on the heart and that it is they

which have the strongest claim to pity; had he not had the bitter experience of this truth during his first year of married life? This should not have been forgotten by him, and it was not right of him to mete out such treatment to Josephine. Her grief should have been sacred to him—as every grief should be; he should have forborne to make her weep. The ancients, who had more heart than is commonly supposed, collected the tears of those they loved in urns, as well as the tears with which they mourned their friends—so sacred a thing was sorrow in their eyes. But, as Madame de Rémusat has said, "In spite of the preference he showed for his wife, it was when he had some love affair on hand that he revealed to the full the domineering element in his character. How put out he used to be at the slightest obstacle! How roughly he would treat the jealous solicitude of his wife! 'You ought,' he used to tell her, 'to agree to anything I take into my head. You ought to regard it as perfectly natural for me to allow myself such distractions. I have the right to answer all your complaints by an everlasting *I*. I am a man apart from all the rest of the world and refuse to be bound by any man's rule of conduct.'"[1] Such was the kind of reply he would make, in the heat of the quarrel, to Josephine's recriminations. It must not be forgotten—Madame de Rémusat has placed it on record *à propos* of this very intrigue with Madame Duchâtel—that in his *liaisons* Napoleon began by showing more than usual kindness to his wife; it was only her querulous complaints that rendered him bitter and violent, and

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 115.

he soon became again the *bon garçon* that he generally was.

Poor Josephine away down at the other end of the salon seemed to divine that she was the topic of conversation among the players at those evening card-parties. Their furtive glances seemed plainly to tell her so, and her eyes, whose lids were flood-gates always ready to let loose streams of tears, turned, at every shout of laughter that came from the little table, a wistful look of unutterable distress on the pitiless merrymakers.

The Empress, then, was a prey to a thousand jealous doubts when a trifling incident occurred which practically revealed to her the true state of affairs.

Shortly before the Coronation, Marshal Berthier, the Minister of War, gave a grand fête which concluded with a supper at which only the ladies sat down to table. The Empress was seated at the principal table and the ladies of her court had taken their places on either side of her. The banquet hall was extremely brilliant and the whole scene was one of high festivity. The Emperor, who had refused a seat, was passing round the table speaking a few gracious words to each of the ladies. That evening he was in the best of humours, a condition of things which was beginning to be none too common with him. He had chatted awhile with his wife and had even carried his attentiveness so far as to take a plate from a page and place it before her with his own hands. Evidently there is no denying the truth of the saying that love works miracles. Doubtless Josephine thought the same, for she was by no means mollified by these unusual atten-

tions. "What has taken my husband," she asked herself, "to make him so good-tempered? Clearly there is something he wishes to hide from me." And as jealousy imparts insight even to the least intelligent, she was not slow to perceive, now that her mistrust had been aroused to the highest pitch, that her husband, in his progress round the table, had come to a standstill between Madame Junot and Madame Duchâtel, who were seated side by side. Madame Duchâtel happened at the moment to be making an effort to reach a dish of olives that was some little distance from her. The Emperor immediately stepped between the two chairs, picked up the dish and offered it to her, saying:

"You ought not to eat olives at night, Madame, they will make you ill."

The Empress, who was watching him from a distance, not being accustomed to see him display such gallantry, was greatly disturbed. Napoleon, feeling that his wife's suspicious glances were upon him, endeavoured to divert them by saying a few words to Madame Junot.

"And you, Madame Junot, you are not eating olives. You do well, doubly well indeed, not to imitate Madame Duchâtel, for she is in every respect inimitable."

Madame Duchâtel blushed and the Emperor withdrew, but the lingering look she gave him spoke volumes to a jealous woman, and the Empress understood and recognised how matters were. She vowed that she would certainly make her husband pay for his attentions to the "dame du palais" by treating him to

another outburst of weeping. But of what strange stuff the human heart is made! As a consequence of that madness which makes us long to find out as soon as possible that which it will only pain us to hear, the Empress, in her anxiety to confirm her suspicions, which had now almost developed into certainty, invited Madame Junot to lunch with her the next day.

"Was it about your coming departure for Spain that the Emperor was talking to you at Berthier's last night?" she asked.[1]

"Yes, Madame, he was speaking to me about my gowns and of what was incumbent upon me as a Frenchwoman of fashion. It is a subject on which the Emperor does not discourse as a rule."

"And what of Madame Duchâtel? Did he talk to her too about dress?" replied the Empress, with a smile that betrayed all the bitterness of her thoughts.

"No, Madame, he told her, so far as I remember, not to eat olives at night."

"Oh! Well then, since he was giving her advice, he should have told her that it is ridiculous for a woman to give herself the airs of a Roxelana with a nose as long as hers."[2]

So saying she rose and went towards the mantelpiece. On it she found the two little volumes that

[1] General Junot had just been appointed Ambassador at Lisbon and the Emperor had entrusted him with a diplomatic mission to the Court of Madrid which he was to perform on his way. His wife was to accompany him on the journey. (See the account of this embassy in the *Revue des deux Mondes* for 1894, by M. le Comte Charles de Mouy.)

[2] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. V, p. 175.

Madame de Genlis had just published concerning Mademoiselle de la Vallière.[1]

This work, though characterised by the insipidity which marks her writings as a whole, was then all the rage, and there was not a bedroom at Saint Cloud, La Malmaison, or the Tuileries where a copy was not to be found on the table. People used to search its pages for allusions to the amours of the Emperor and Madame Duchâtel.

"That is a book," said the Empress, pushing it aside with a gesture of annoyance, "which turns the head of every woman who has light hair and a slender figure. They all fancy themselves 'favourites.' But they will be taught their places. And *à propos* of that, would you believe it, Madame Junot, people actually tried to make mischief between you and me a few years back when I went to Plombières . . . but I never believed their stories about you, poor little woman."

The truth of the matter is that she had believed them all. She readily drank in everything people told her on her return from Plombières. She was informed that her husband had been seen coming out of Madame Junot's room at five o'clock in the morning, but it seems that she attached less importance to these reports than to the stories that were told her about Madame de Rémusat and her long nocturnal confabulations with Bonaparte in the camp at Boulogne.

Such was the state of affairs when Madame Duchâtel entered upon her duties at Saint-Cloud. Josephine did

[1] *La duchesse de la Vallière.* Sold by Maradan, bookseller, No. 29 Rue des Grands-Augustins over against the Rue du Pont de Lodi, year xiii (1804). This book ran through several editions.

not look upon her with favour. The suspicions which had assailed her on the occasion of the fête given by the Minister of War had by no means disappeared, and the more she thought about the matter the more solid seemed the grounds of her mistrust. Unable to keep her own counsel she confided in Madame de Rémusat, who did her utmost to set her mind at rest, but it was not easy to make her believe one thing when she had ocular demonstration of another, and she did not dismiss her apprehensions.

The opportunity for which she was on the look-out of catching her husband *in flagrante delicto* was not long in presenting itself. The Emperor's own apartments at Saint-Cloud were on the ground floor and looked on to the garden. On the next floor, but communicating with them by a private staircase, were some other rooms which the Emperor had had furnished, and it was these which had aroused Josephine's gravest suspicions. "If the Emperor receives a woman in the château at all, it must be there," she thought.

One morning the Empress was seated with a good many people around her when she saw Madame Duchâtel, of whom she scarcely ever lost sight, quit the salon. The time passed by, but not so her misgivings. Taking Madame de Rémusat aside she said to her, "In a few minutes I shall clear up all my doubts. Stay here with these people, and if anyone asks where I am, tell them the Emperor has sent for me." Madame de Rémusat used her best endeavours to bring her back to reason and to persuade her not to compromise her dignity, but she soon perceived the futility of expostulating with one whose mind was

made up, and saw that she might as well talk to a brick wall. Josephine was obdurate and left the room. Obstinacy is a characteristic defect of small-minded people; they mistake it for firmness of will, whereas it is merely weakness.

About half an hour later the Empress re-entered the salon by a different door from that by which she had left it. Her ideas appeared to be in complete disorder. She seated herself at her tapestry frame and wove a thread or two occasionally here and there; then she sat motionless, her hands on her knees, gazing distractedly in front of her. Her bosom heaved with painful sighs, and she was evidently labouring under the stress of some overmastering emotion. Madame de Rémusat, who was seated in an opposite corner of the room, was watching without seeming to be looking at her, and did not lose a single detail of the dramatic scene which was then being enacted.

The Empress was not the woman to keep matters to herself in such a crisis, and all at once she rose from her seat and ordered Madame de Rémusat to follow her. She went to her own apartment. "It is all over," she cried, as she closed the door behind her confidante, "my worst forebodings were but too well justified. I went to look for the Emperor in his private room, but he was not there. I then went up by the secret staircase to the little room above. The door was locked, but through the keyhole I heard the voices of Bonaparte and Madame ——. Knocking loudly, I said who I was, and you can imagine what a state they were in when they heard me. Some time elapsed before they opened the door, but

when they did so the condition they were in, their general disarray, did not leave me the smallest room for doubt. I know that I ought to have controlled myself, but I simply could not do so, and I broke out into a torrent of reproaches. Madame —— began to weep, and Bonaparte put himself into such an ungovernable fury that I hardly had time to flee from his violence. I am still trembling all over, and I expect there will be a terrible scene."[1]

In this her expectations were fulfilled. The Emperor's rage was indescribable, the fact that he was in the wrong only adding to his fury. A life of habitual deceit and of daily dissimulation eats like a canker into a man's heart and turns awry the current of his nature.

Madame de Rémusat increased the terror of her imprudent mistress by telling her that it was absolutely necessary for her to face the Emperor's wrath alone; that his violence would subside of its own accord, and that his natural gentleness and serenity of temper would regain their customary ascendency. Thus Madame de Rémusat persuaded the Empress to return to the salon while she betook herself to an adjoining apartment, not, as one might suppose, to see and hear what was about to take place, but in order that the usual routine of the château should not be thrown out of gear. There she found Madame Duchâtel who had just come in, and who, despite her self-command, could not conceal the evidences of some unusual emotion. Others were there too. They guessed that something mysterious was afoot into

[1] Madame de Rémusat, Vol. II, p. 46.

which they had not the courage to enquire, and they looked at one another with mute and anxious faces, for everything told them that a tempest was brewing.

There was indeed! Suddenly the voice of the Emperor broke upon their ears like the hollow rumbling of distant thunder. There were words that came thick and fast, the sound of a terrible voice raised in anger and the noise of crashing furniture. All this they heard, but they were unable to distinguish a single word. They looked at each other, pale and trembling, knowing nothing of what was going forward but in terror lest the cataclysm should involve them also. Madame Duchâtel heard the mutterings of the storm, but had not the courage to stay and see it out. She rose, ordered her horses and left for Paris. As for the rest they dispersed, so that when the hour of reconciliation should come they might not be suspected of having been witnesses of this little domestic disagreement.

The Emperor had found it beyond endurance that his wife should dare to come and surprise him in such a manner. He created a terrifying scene, saying the cruellest things and shattering everything within his reach, and he concluded by declaring that he would take care that she got ready to quit the château immediately. The divorce which he had been so misguided as to postpone would soon repay her intolerable eavesdropping, her shameful espionage, and would restore to him at last the peace of mind which had never been his since he married her. Nor did he omit to tell her that she was the last person in the world to

call anyone to account on the score of conjugal infidelity.

Acting on the wise counsels of her daughter and Madame de Rémusat, the Empress made such skilful use of her faculty for weeping that she disarmed her husband's wrath and effected a reconciliation.

The result was that she resigned herself to seeing the attentions that should have been paid to her lavished on another. But she bided her time, going no further than to treat Madame Duchâtel with the same silent contempt which she had before erroneously inflicted on the good and innocent Maréchale Ney. As a consequence of this incident, life at the château became a little hell. The sympathies of the Imperial Family were divided; so, therefore, were those of the people at Court. Some were for Josephine, others for Napoleon, and every day saw wranglings and bickerings without end. But in the midst of it all, Madame Duchâtel was basking in the glory of her triumph. "She seemed ever more and more to occupy the Emperor's thoughts, and the more sure she became of her ascendency the less respectful grew her attitude towards the Empress, in whose distress she appeared to take delight."[1] A woman's vanity indeed is never completely satisfied until she has inflicted a crushing humiliation on her rival or on her whose husband she has led astray.

Such, then, was the state of affairs when the Emperor conceived the notion of going to La Malmaison for a few days with his mistress and his court. It was not the time of year for going into the country; it was in

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 110.

fact the depth of winter, and the cold was intense. There had been no time to make any preparations; the rooms had not been aired beforehand, and the result was that the first day everyone was frozen.

But neither the Emperor nor his favourite troubled about that; they did not appear to feel the cold in the least, and spent nearly all their time together. Nor did they attempt the slightest concealment, but, making no secret of their relationship, went for long walks together in the park. They used to be accompanied on these occasions by the youthful Madame Savary, whose easy-going view of the situation was scarcely becoming seeing that she was a relative of Josephine's. Meanwhile the unhappy Empress herself would take her stand at her bedroom window and gaze wistfully at their retreating figures till they were lost to view behind the clumps of leafless trees. In the evening she would seek distraction from the morning's spectacle by concealing herself behind the door of the Emperor's room, when peering cautiously through the glass panels she beheld him and Madame Duchâtel conversing together on terms of the closest intimacy.[1]

The sojourn at La Malmaison should have reminded Josephine that its walls had witnessed other breaches of the marriage bond at the time when Bonaparte was away in Egypt, and the reflection should have disposed her not to be too harsh with him.[2] But do we ever pardon others for the faults we so readily condone in ourselves?

At this time the Emperor was so deeply in love with

[1] Mademoiselle Avrillon, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, pp. 43–5.

[2] See M. Turquan's work on *La générale Bonaparte*, pp. 153, 154.

his fair mistress that in order to spend as much time with her as possible he bestowed rather less attention than usual on affairs of State, though we must do him the justice to add that he never entirely neglected them for the sake of a woman. As for Madame Duchâtel, she was doubtless far from suspecting, when she saw the Emperor so carried away by his affection, that her reign was drawing to its close. She flaunted her triumph before the weeping Empress, seeming to crush her with disdain, when lo, the scene changed. "Don't weep about it then," said Napoleon one day to Josephine, "it was nothing at all. Did I cause you pain? Well, come then, forgive me, and I will tell you all about it." Filled with delight and curiosity, Josephine forgot her troubles and made him tell her all the story. "He kept no secrets from her, confessed that he certainly had been very much in love, but added that it was all over now. He said, too, that he thought he had perceived in her some inclination to rule him. He even went so far in his avowals as to mention details that violated the laws of the most ordinary decency, and finally requested the Empress to help him break off a relationship that had become distasteful to him."[1]

How like men it was! They have not sufficient courage to break with a woman when they have ceased to care for her. They must needs get someone to help them, though Bonaparte's plan of requesting the cooperation of his wife in the matter had a decided smack of originality about it. One may imagine with what eagerness she responded to the invitation. Summoning her rival before her she adopted a sort of maternal

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 111.

tone, telling her that she had only just avoided seriously compromising herself, that her conduct, which *had* perhaps been somewhat incautious, had set people talking, and that there must be no repetition of that sort of thing at the Court where, merely to injure someone's reputation, everyone was so ready to put a wrong interpretation on deeds conceived perhaps with the best intentions in the world. She finished by making her promise that she would be more circumspect for the future and avoid the slightest appearance of light behaviour.

Josephine was much pleased with her sermon. Madame Duchâtel hardly liked it so well. Putting on her lofty air of offended dignity she expressed astonishment at finding herself the object of expostulation on such a subject. Never in her life had she conducted herself in a manner to call for such criticism, and it was really extremely painful for her to find herself the victim of some old woman, who, jealous no doubt of her youth and of some casual compliments the Emperor may have paid her, was endeavouring to revenge herself by inventing mischievous reports about her.

This, of course, was intended to apply directly to the Empress. The latter understood that perfectly well, but said nothing. After all, her peace of mind was well worth such a wound as that.

Affairs resumed their normal course at Court, and Madame Duchâtel went about her duties as "dame du palais" as though nothing had happened. It scarcely became a discarded mistress to stay on at the Court, but how was she to get away and what would her

husband have thought? "It has been stated," writes Madame de Rémusat, "that the Emperor returned to her now and again; but such returns, if they took place, were only of the briefest duration, and did nothing to restore her former credit." She was among those who went with the Court on the occasion of the memorable visit to Fontainebleau in 1807, but the Emperor did not appear to take the slightest notice of her. But then, as we shall see, he had other love affairs on hand.

CHAPTER VI

The little house in the Allée des Veuves—The lack of prudence that marks the Emperor's conduct of his love affairs—Madame Récamier; her effect on Napoleon—He longs for her with all the force of his nature—Incidents of the past—Madame Récamier's ingratitude towards Napoleon—Fouché plays the part of Napoleon's ambassador in respect of the fair Juliette—Preliminary negotiations at Clichy—Fouché definitely offers to Madame Récamier the post of *dame du palais*—The Princess Caroline adds her entreaties to those of Fouché—Influenced no doubt by her entourage Juliette refuses the offer—The Emperor and the daughter of an official in his office—The Emperor's theories concerning love—An indiscretion of the Emperor—Mademoiselle Mars.

WAS it Madame Duchâtel whom Constant had in mind in the story he tells of an incident that must have taken place about the end of the Consulate or the beginning of the Empire? It is possible, but for the following reasons it is not probable. For the purposes of his amours it was Napoleon's habit to make use of the little house he had taken in the Allée des Veuves. Now Constant knew that house perfectly well, whereas in his account of the episode in question he speaks of a mansion with an entrance for carriages. But whatever the facts may be, this is the story in his own words.

"One night between eleven and twelve o'clock, the Emperor sent for me, asked for a black coat and a round hat, and commanded me to attend him.

Together with Prince Murat we entered a dark-coloured carriage. César was on the box and there was only one footman to open the door, and neither he nor the coachman was in livery. After a short drive the Emperor ordered them to pull up in the Rue de ——. He got out, walked on a few paces and, knocking at the carriage gate of a large house, went in alone. Hour after hour went by and we began to grow alarmed. The Emperor's life had been attempted quite often enough to make our apprehension of some fresh trap or ambush only too justifiable. Such misgivings lend wings to the imagination. Prince Murat fell to cursing and swearing with a will; His Majesty's rashness, his taste for gallantry, and the lady's blandishments all coming in for a share of his maledictions. Though I felt quite as uneasy in my mind, I showed less agitation than he, and did my best to calm him. At last, unable any longer to contain himself, he leapt out of the carriage, I following close on his heels. He was just preparing to knock, when the door opened and the Emperor reappeared. It was already broad daylight. The Prince told him what a state of anxiety we had been in, and what we thought of his recklessness. 'Rubbish,' His Majesty replied. 'What had you got to be in such a panic about? Am I not at home wherever I go?'"

This was no answer at all, and Napoleon returned his companions' anxious solicitude for his welfare by a piece of claptrap in which conceit and pose were the preponderating characteristics. For who was to know for certain that the woman into whose house he went had not been laying a trap for him? The attempt of the 3 Nivôse, Cadoudal's conspiracy and other plots that had all come within an ace of success were not yet ancient history. Was it not natural enough then to fear lest some perfidious Delilah had been bribed by

the Philistines to lure him to a treacherous assignation and then deliver him into their hands?

The Emperor had just severed his relations with Madame Duchâtel, and, being greatly preoccupied by the ominous clouds which were beginning to gather in the direction of Austria and Russia, had little inclination to think of affairs of gallantry, when one evening he happened to see Madame Récamier at the Théâtre-Français, and it dawned on him that the popular verdict was correct and that she was, without doubt, the prettiest woman in Paris. He studied her, opera-glass in hand, with all the delight of an artist and expressed astonishment at having hitherto been practically unmoved by her beauty, which, though he had certainly admitted its existence, had never appealed to him as it did that evening. Even when he had got back to the Tuileries her loveliness still haunted him. Never, within his recollection, had he seen her look so beautiful. The dazzling whiteness of her complexion and her shoulders, her beautiful fair tresses, exercised a strange fascination over him, and he could not help longing for her with all the passionate ardour of his Corsican temperament. But how was he to win this "King's portion"? Madame Récamier was not a woman to yield to the attack with the readiness of a waiting-woman or a *lectrice*, and her lovers affirmed that her virtue was unassailable. It was common knowledge in Paris that Monsieur Récamier had never availed himself of his marital rights. It was further stated—but not above a whisper—that she suffered from some physical defect that precluded her from even thinking of love. It was indeed whispered still more

softly that the only one who believed the story was her husband, and that the adorable Juliette had merely invented it to keep him at a respectful distance. He was much older than herself, and as a matter of fact she entertained none of a lover's feelings towards him. She contented herself with spending his money. But her friends, M. Mathieu de Montmorency, M. de Montrond, etc., who knew precisely what truth there was in the story that was going the rounds, were by no means slow to repeat it.

All this was to add fuel to the fire as far as the Emperor was concerned, and he marvelled that he had never before experienced an attraction which now appeared to him irresistible. For young Madame Récamier was really a long-standing acquaintance of his. He remembered perfectly having met her at the fêtes held at the Luxembourg by the Director Barras.[1] He had seen her half-nude like Madame Hamelin, Madame Tallien, and Madame Hainguerlot, those neo-Grecians "robed all in their modesty," who were ogled by the muscadins at Longchamps. He had seen her again somewhat later—this was scarcely so agreeable a recollection—after his marvellous campaign in Italy.

[1] Although Madame Récamier's niece, Madame Le Normand, claims in her work entitled *Souvenirs et Correspondance de Madame Récamier* that her aunt never mixed in the society of the Directory, that she only went to one ball given by Barras (and that in the interests of her husband), there is no doubt that she did frequent that society. "I have it on good authority," writes Arsène Houssaye, "that Madame Récamier haunted the salons of the Directory and that, notwithstanding the extent to which she plumed herself on her virtue, she did not disdain to join in the cotillon with Madame Tallien and the *quelques autres*. Besides, where would Madame Récamier have deigned to appear but in the fashionable salons?" (Arsène Houssaye, *Notre Dame de Thermidor*, p. 446).

It was on the occasion of the fête given by the Directory in his honour in the Court of the Luxembourg. Barras was replying to a short speech Napoleon had just made in response to the address delivered by Citizen Talleyrand, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Madame Récamier, the better to see him, had risen to her feet. If Bonaparte was the lion of the day, Madame Récamier was undoubtedly the lioness. She could not go out for a moment on foot without having an admiring crowd of two or three hundred people at her heels. As soon as she was seen standing up, the company, who previously had had their gaze fixed on the General, had no eyes for anyone but her. There arose a prolonged murmur of admiration which demonstrated that Madame Récamier's beauty was likely to take the gilt off Barras' discourse and consequently off the success of the fête as a compliment to the General as well. Bonaparte could brook no rivalry. He perceived that the attention of the gathering had been diverted from the Director's oration and therefore from himself, and looked round sharply to see who it was that presumed thus to dispute with him the attention of the company. His action was characterised by that imperiousness of manner which Horace Vernet afterwards so happily caught in his picture "La Bataille d'Iéna."[1] Madame Récamier was awestricken and sat down in a second, nor did she attempt a repetition of the performance.

Three years later he saw her again, but the memory of this meeting was a most pleasant one. It was in the early days of the Consulate. Lucien Bonaparte,

[1] This picture is in the Museum at Versailles.

who was then Minister of the Interior, was excessively smitten with her. It happened one day that he gave a dinner and a concert in honour of his brother, to which Monsieur and Madame Récamier were invited. Both of them came, and it was then that Bonaparte had the opportunity of beholding this fashionable beauty at close quarters and of exchanging a few words with her. This is how it came about.

The Chief Consul was in the drawing-room standing up in front of the fireplace when Madame Récamier, who had just arrived, came and seated herself at one of the corners of the same fireplace. Almost as soon as she had sat down, she bowed and smiled at him with all that gracious charm which she knew so well how to assume. She afterwards said that she mistook him for his brother Joseph, whom she frequently met at Madame de Staël's, and that this was why she gave him such a friendly salute. A little surprised, Bonaparte hastened graciously to return her salutation. Then it was that Madame Récamier perceived her mistake. Bonaparte leant over towards Fouché who was standing by him and chatted with him for some minutes, letting his gaze rest on Madame Récamier all the while. She was clearly the subject of his remarks, for a few moments later Fouché came to make his bow to the fair Juliette and said, "Do you know, the Chief Consul thinks you are charming."

Madame Récamier was evidently flattered at Fouché's message and possibly displayed her satisfaction, while the Chief Consul, for his part, was thinking how he could win her favour. He was playing, as naturally as could be, with Lucien's little four-year-old daughter,

but an attentive observer might have seen that his thoughts were far away. He was holding the child's hand and looking dreamily in front of him in the direction of Madame Récamier; he seemed lost in reverie and altogether to have forgotten his little niece, whose hand he was clasping tightly in his own. Distressed to find that she could not release herself, the child began to cry, and the sound brought the Consul back to consciousness. "Oh! poor child," said he in a tone of affectionate concern, "I had quite forgotten you."

At this moment Lucien came up to Madame Récamier and entered into conversation with her. Everyone knows the ardour with which he courted her and though, according to the general report, it was all in vain, nothing seemed to dishearten him. He was, it appears, talking about Clichy, a magnificent estate just outside Paris which Monsieur Récamier had presented to his wife, when the Chief Consul, notwithstanding that he knew his brother to be a constant visitor at Clichy and that he was well aware of the reasons which took him there, joined in the conversation, remarking graciously, "I too should very much like to go to Clichy."

Elisa Baciocchi guessed instinctively that Bonaparte had taken a fancy to Madame Récamier, and it is to a sisterly anxiety to aid in the fulfilment of his projects rather than to a desire to curry favour with her powerful brother that we must ascribe her readiness to help him. She said something to Madame Récamier as they went in to dinner, but the latter did not catch what it was. Elisa had bidden her sit next the Chief Consul, for it was she who was doing the honours

of her brother's house. Lucien, as we need not remind the reader, had married, not without reluctance, the daughter of an innkeeper at Saint-Maximin, whom he had seduced and by whom he had had a child. Poor Christine, as she was called, though well-meaning enough, was quite illiterate, and her husband, who had swiftly grown weary of her, never liked to produce her in society, being perpetually on thorns lest she should do or say something she ought not to. He had therefore instructed his sister to take her place as mistress of the house, and she, aspiring to become a political hostess and to be regarded as a woman of exalted merit, discharged her duties with a zeal that not infrequently exceeded her *savoir faire*. It was her lack of the last-mentioned quality which was responsible for the fact that on the present occasion Madame Récamier sat some places away from the Consul instead of at his left hand, the result being that what Bonaparte construed as a refusal to sit next to him was nothing more than the outcome of a misunderstanding. With some irritation he turned towards the people who were still looking for their places, and catching sight of Garat called out to him, "Here you are, Garat, sit down here." All the time he kept his eyes fixed on Madame Récamier, and observing Cambacérès take his seat beside her, exclaimed in a voice loud enough to be heard by all and particularly by the lady herself, "Ah! Citizen Consul, there you are, seated by the fairest!"

Bonaparte, as everyone is aware, made short work of his meals. Those who dined with him used to do as he did in this respect and followed him as soon as



Gérard, paint.

MADAME RÉCAMIER

From an engraving in the Collection of A. M. Broadley, Esq.

he quitted the table, for it was he who gave the signal for the company to rise. On this occasion, out of regard perhaps for the woman whose favours he hoped to win, he remained at table longer than usual and did not rise for a full half-hour. All the guests then laid down their napkins and followed him into the drawing-room. While this movement was taking place the Chief Consul approached Madame Récamier and spoke to her in a tone of kindly interest, which, considering his habitually brusque, off-hand manner, was as significant as it was rare. It recalled the advice he gave to Madame Duchâtel when he counselled her not to eat olives at night. "Were you not cold at dinner?" he enquired. And when she replied in the negative with a smile as gracious as it was radiant, he went on, "Why did you not sit next me?" "I should not have dared," replied the young woman in bewitching tones. "Oh! but it was your proper place."

Thereupon Madame Baciocchi, who had been following close behind and had overheard her brother's words, broke in and said, "That is just what I told you going into the dining-room; your place was next to the Consul."

When all the party had returned to the drawing-room the music began. The ladies sat in a semicircle facing the performers, the men standing up behind them. General Bonaparte had taken a chair beside the piano so that he sat facing the women. He had chosen this position on purpose as it placed him opposite Madame Récamier, who was in the front row. He could thus study her at his ease and he liberally availed himself of the opportunity.

The singing commenced; the magnificent voice of the inimitable Garat was heard in a piece by Glück, which he rendered with his customary talent. Other performers followed and won their meed of applause. Then came the turn of the instrumentalists, but the Chief Consul soon wearied of that. At the conclusion of a piece played by Jadin he began shouting, "Garat, Garat," and enforced every shout with a thump on the piano. Garat hastened to comply with the demand. He began a passage from *Orphée* and held his audience spell-bound by his marvellous voice.

Madame Récamier was passionately fond of music. She abandoned herself to the magic charm which the divine notes of Garat's voice had cast over her senses, and she was absorbed in heavenly reverie. She was not aware that a few feet from her the Chief Consul was gazing at her with rapt attention. He seemed as though he could not take his eyes off so captivating a countenance and one which betokened a capacity for feeling which, in spite of conventional affirmations to the contrary, is in reality extremely rare in women and gives such an irresistible attractiveness to those whose gift it is. At length she became conscious that someone was gazing intently upon her. The consciousness seemed to oppress her, and somewhat ill at ease she raised her eyes as though to beseech her inquisitor, whoever it might be, not to mar the Paradise into which the music had lured her soul by persisting in his unwelcome attentions, when she perceived that the troublesome individual in question was none other than the Chief Consul himself.

Although it is always flattering to a woman to find

herself the object of the attentions of a distinguished man, and particularly of such a remarkable man as Napoleon, Madame Récamier could not help feeling slightly uncomfortable at being regarded with such persistence, and it afforded her genuine relief when the concert came to an end. General Bonaparte then crossed over to where she was sitting and by way of opening the conversation said, "You are very fond of music, Madame?" At this moment they were joined by the egregious Lucien, who still hoped to make a conquest of Madame Récamier, and he began to lay down the law to her with that emphatic self-sufficient manner of his. The Chief Consul lost patience and surrendered the field to him and Madame Récamier soon after took her departure.

But the impression she had made upon Bonaparte was a lasting one. Her fair head, the sound of her voice, the elegance of her most trifling movements, the depth of feeling which the music had produced in her, all this stirred to the depths his passionate Corsican nature and set vibrating certain chords in his being which hitherto no other woman had touched. Yet amid all this complex throng of sentiments, vanity had its little corner; vanity moreover that was by no means free from vulgarity, the vanity of a parvenu who wished it to be said about him that he had the most beautiful woman in Paris for his own.

The Chief Consul then was casting about for a means of winning Madame Récamier. It was not open to him to go to her bedroom in the early morning and tap her feet beneath the counterpane as he had done in the case of Madame Junot; a measure which, by the way, had

not been crowned with success. An opportunity to be of great service to Madame Récamier soon occurred, and he did not miss it. It must not be taken for granted that a mere personal interest was the sole motive in the act of clemency which we are about to relate. It is more natural to ascribe it in the first instance to the innate kindness of heart which lay concealed beneath Bonaparte's usually harsh exterior, while a desire to propitiate his opponents and disarm the animosity of the Royalists, and finally the wish to do a service to Bernadotte, who had married the sister of Joseph's wife, were doubtless contributory motives.

Monsieur Bernard, Madame Récamier's father, had been arrested for complicity in certain Royalist plots of a more or less active description. General Bernadotte, who was a great friend of Madame Récamier, went at once to the Chief Consul to persuade him to command Fouché not to bring the old man to justice, and Bonaparte signed an order for his immediate release.[1] It does not appear that Madame Récamier manifested any excess of gratitude on account of this conspicuous service. Flattered by the attentions bestowed on her by certain prominent Royalists, she dwelt in an atmosphere of opposition; she disliked the new form of government, and her presence at the court when judgment was delivered against General Moreau excited Bonaparte's displeasure; such a proceeding looked very much like an act of hostility and was a poor return for the Consul's kindness in regard to Monsieur Bernard. When one is under an obligation of that sort to the head of a Government it is permissible to

[1] This incident is related in *Les Sœurs de Napoléon*, p. 62 onwards.

abstain from actively espousing his cause if conscience forbids it, but the least one ought to do is to put one's sword in the scabbard and retire from the field. Bonaparte, therefore, when he saw the name of this pretty malcontent amongst those who were present at the trial could not help exclaiming, "What business had Madame Récamier to be there?" In spite of everything, he had not given up hope of winning her good graces, and at the time he had himself proclaimed Emperor—having found, politically speaking, that "the pear was ripe"—she perhaps occupied a larger share of his thoughts than he confessed even to himself.

The curtain had been rung down on his *liaison* with Madame Duchâtel and Josephine had contributed the epilogue. He was, then, fancy-free when the memory of Madame Récamier's beautiful eyes came to trouble his peace more than ever. Fouché had already begun to further his aims in this matter on the occasion of Lucien's dinner, and skilful gamekeeper that he was, set out again to beat up in the direction of his master the quarry on which the latter had set his heart.

It was now the summer of 1805. Madame Récamier had just taken up her quarters for the season at Clichy and was receiving even more people there than before. It was the rendezvous of MM. Adrien and Mathieu de Montmorency, M. de Bouillé and M. de Bonald, the irreconcilables of the old régime. Thither also came Benjamin Constant, who little thought that ten years later he would be holding office under the man whom at Clichy he contemptuously called "The Usurper." Then there was Marshal Bernadotte, who dreamt as

little that five years hence he would be putting aside his republicanism to assume a princely crown and be serving his royal apprenticeship as King of Sweden. Finally we must mention Madame de Staël, who, however, may even then have foreboded that exile would ere long repay the intemperate attacks in which she indulged upon a government so little inclined to tolerate them. Side by side with the members of this group, which was known by the name of *la petite église*, were to be found certain partisans of the Emperor, such as Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angely, General Junot, Fouché, and some others. For some time past indeed Fouché had insensibly become one of the habitués of the house. Occasionally Madame Récamier marvelled more than a little at the assiduity with which this regicide, this Minister of Police, presented himself at her house; but such was the charm she wielded over men that she innocently thought the explanation was probably a sentimental one. At any rate, since Fouché was the means of securing the fulfilment of every request she put forward on behalf of her friends, it was no wish of hers to displease so useful a personage by making him feel *de trop* at Clichy.

Fouché, for his part, had a double purpose to serve in frequenting Madame Récamier's salon. A born police officer, he derived a sort of professional pleasure in personally keeping an eye on the guests of the house; secondly, he was still endeavouring to fulfil the singular line of policy he had conceived during the Consulate, which aimed at bringing Napoleon and Madame Récamier together. But it was in vain that he came early and went late; he could never succeed in

finding the mistress of the house alone. At last, weary of wasting his time and doubtless urged on by Napoleon, he one day asked her to grant him a private interview. With her customary amiability Madame Récamier invited him to lunch with her next day, adding that she would be very unlucky if she could not find a means of escaping from her friends for a minute or two in order to grant him the interview he requested.

The following morning therefore the Minister of Police arrived, his face wreathed in smiles. He had a long conversation with the fair Juliette, during which politics were practically the only topic discussed. With fatherly gentleness he reproved her for gathering so many of the Emperor's enemies about her and for forgetting, thanks to the animosity with which they inspired her, the great service Napoleon had rendered her and all her family by quashing the trial of her father Monsieur Bernard, when the evidence which they had against him would have meant death or at the very least transportation to Sinnamary. He added that the Emperor was painfully impressed at finding such a lack of gratitude in a woman whose tenderness of heart, quite as much as her beauty, was the universal theme of admiration. He urged her as a friend to forbear to manifest such hostility towards him, for, whatever pleasure it might afford her friends, it was certainly not in accordance with the feelings by which she ought to be animated. In support of his case he cited the instance of the Duchesse de Chevreuse who had declared war on the Emperor but was obliged after a word or two from this Cæsar to lower her flag and so

far humble herself as to accept a post in the Imperial Household.

When at length the astute Minister touched on the sentimental aspect of the matter, which he did in language of great caution, he concluded by saying, "Besides, since the day, already long past, when the Emperor met you for the first time he has never forgotten you, never ceased to bear you in mind. Be well advised and do not wound him."[1] Thus Fouché prepared his ground for the delicate mission with which he had been entrusted, and that day he went no further. Madame Récamier replied that she did not occupy herself with politics and that no one else in her house did so. As for her friends, at whom he was wrong to take umbrage, it was quite possible that they did not share the views of the Government, but she herself took no notice of their opinions and the proof of it was that she had connexions in every party, and this he ought to know better than anybody, seeing that he himself was a friend of hers.

A little while afterwards the Minister of Police came again to Clichy. "Do you know," said he to Madame Récamier as they were strolling in the park, "I talked about you for more than an hour yesterday evening. Guess with whom." "But how in the world do you expect me to guess?" "Well, then, it was with the Emperor." "The Emperor? He hardly knows me." "Since the first day he met you, Madame, you have been constantly in his thoughts, and he considers it very unfortunate for him that you should side with his enemies. He says nothing against

[1] *Souvenirs et correspondance de Madame Récamier*, Vol. I.

your personal feelings, his quarrel is with your friends."

Called to account in this direct manner, Madame Récamier replied that she had at first felt irresistibly attracted by the Emperor. The glory of his campaigns in Italy and Egypt and of his overwhelming victory at Marengo had held her spell-bound. The incomparable genius by which he had fashioned out of the débris of Old France and the Revolution the mightiest nation in Europe had carried her admiration to the point of enthusiasm. And again, when she saw how unaffected and gracious he was towards her at Lucien's house, she conceived for him the very highest esteem. But the treatment that had been meted out to Moreau and to the Duc d'Enghien, the persecution of her friends and the recent exile of Madame de Staël had cooled her enthusiasm and damped the ardour of her admiration.

"Bah!" exclaimed Fouché, "those are Royalist sentiments; the Emperor had no alternative. He had to defend his life against conspirators who were thirsting for his blood. Besides, that is not the question. You must follow the example of Madame de Chevreuse and come to the Court. Your place is there, and I can give you my word for it, the Emperor will be pleased to see you."

Madame Récamier seemed quite taken aback at this point-blank proposal of the Minister of Police. She had been thoroughly imbued with the ideas of her friends, who had possibly foreseen that their idol might be tempted by offers from the Imperial Court, whose magnificence and splendour had seduced so

many others; and they had doubtless put her on her guard. It had, moreover, been very flattering to her vanity that she, a plebeian, should have been honoured with the homage of the Montmorencys and all the most distinguished people in the Royalist party. Like all these members of *la petite église* she did not anticipate a long life for the new order of things, and she thought that when the end arrived and her friends had come into their own again she would occupy a far more brilliant position than in this upstart Court, which could boast of no traditions and on which the Royalists never wearied of sharpening the edge of their sarcasms. She therefore told Fouché that his offer could not be accepted by her, and spoke of the simplicity of her tastes, her timid disposition and her love of independence.

Fouché smiled as he listened to these words. He assumed his kindliest tones and again repeated how absolutely necessary it was that she should accept a post in the household of the Empress. Side by side with the brilliance of such an office, he threw out hints of a mission she might fulfil that would call for a display of devotion and patriotism. It was, he told her, a mission such as she was fitted as it were by Providence to carry out, and was worthy of her great heart. The mission he contemplated was nothing less than to be a guide to the Emperor, to influence him by means of that delicate tact with which she was so supremely gifted. "Remember," said he, "that the Emperor, as he is at present placed, is in need of a woman to advise him, to be a friend to him. Where do you suppose such a woman is to be found? Among

all his entourage there is not a single one with endowments that would fit her for the task, neither does there exist one whose external attractions are to be compared with those of which all Paris acclaims the magic charm."

No woman is indifferent to flattery, particularly when it proceeds from a man occupying a distinguished position. Madame Récamier was pre-eminently susceptible to such attentions, but as she persisted in her protestations Fouché added astutely, "Do not be apprehensive, Madame, my words convey not the slightest measure of offence; I am thoroughly aware whom I am addressing. There is no one in society whose reputation is so unassailable, so absolutely pure as yours. It is as a *friend* of the Emperor that I am anxious to see you at the Tuileries, and that for the welfare of the nation. Ah! if you did but know the good it is in your power to do. . . . No, Madame, I say again it is a *friend* that the Emperor needs, not a mistress."

Madame Récamier was astonished but by no means put out. On the contrary, Fouché's proposal that she should become the Emperor's friend and counsellor, his Egeria as people used to say in those days, tickled both her fancy and her vanity.

"But," said she, "all the vacancies in the Emperor's household have been filled, and the last thing I should wish would be that Madame de la Rochefoucauld should be deprived of her position as *dame d'honneur* on my account."

"But did I say that she was to be deprived of it? If so, my words must have outstripped my thoughts.

No, you would be there as the friend of the Empress, that is the idea . . . and of the Emperor. All France would witness with delight the beneficent influence that would be exerted by a woman of such lofty capacity over the marvellous man who rules her destinies, for she would represent the new social order, summing up, as it were, in her own person the aims and ideals of Capital, Labour, Intellect, Learning and Finance, forming a living demonstration of the manifold superiority of this new order over a worn-out and universally detested aristocracy whose sole boast lay in the antiquity of its claims. Ah! what a triumph for you," he added, "and therefore for our reorganised society. Take my advice and ponder well over the proposal I have laid before you. It is to your heart, remember, to your generosity, to your devotion, that I make appeal."

Madame Récamier had been thinking over this singular proposal for some days, but had not come to any conclusion, when she received an invitation from Princess Caroline to lunch at Neuilly. Thither she went, but what was her astonishment to find Fouché there also. The Princess exhibited all that charm of manner which, when she had any personal object to attain, she knew so well how to assume. After luncheon they went out into the park and she proposed that they should cross over to the island the better to enjoy the double charm of solitude and freedom from restraint. She led the conversation on to the subject of friendship, and said that the loftiest friendship, that which imparts the deepest happiness to the heart, which exalts a man and enables a woman best to per-

form her beneficent mission on earth, is the friendship between a man and a woman. "But such a sentiment," she continued, "could only exist between a man of the highest order, a man of genius, and a woman who possessed in addition to every gift of heart and mind the rare attributes of purity and virtue. Is there now," she went on, "a man in existence more capable of understanding the happiness of such a friendship and of realising all its worth than the Emperor? There is Josephine, but she does not count; his marriage was a youthful folly and no interchange of thought is possible with her—she has no ideas about anything. No, what the Emperor requires is a woman who would be a friend to him, and such a woman he knows not. How is he to find one among the women of the Court? Certainly I know of none. And then the public would only regard them as mistresses. It is useless to seek her there."

Fouché emphatically endorsed all that Princess Caroline had said. He answered—Madame Récamier seemed absorbed in her own reflexions—that he also felt as she did, and that it afforded him pleasure to find that his views were shared by a sister of the Emperor, a circumstance which proved how well founded they were, but that in a conversation he had already had on the subject with Madame Récamier, he had not been so fortunate as to persuade her to accept an appointment as *dame du palais*.

"But," said the Princess, fearing lest they might have alarmed the innocence of the fair Juliette, "if our charming friend will deign to accept the title of *dame du palais*, it is in my household that I wish her

to fill that position, for I too have need of her friendship and guidance. I will anticipate any objection she may entertain by reminding her that the Emperor has placed the establishments of the Princesses Imperial on precisely the same footing as that of the Empress."

If instead of merely offering her the post of *dame du palais*, they had offered her, straight away, that of *dame d'honneur*, which was held by Madame de la Rochefoucauld, it is possible that Madame Récamier would have accepted. This illustrious woman was far more susceptible on the side of vanity than people have been willing to allow, and in all probability it was vanity that decided her to adhere to her friends Adrien and Mathieu de Montmorency, Christian de Lamoignon and Louis de Narbonne, of whom the last-named had not yet transferred his allegiance to Napoleon. But the proposal that she should become an ordinary *dame du palais* was not one to be accepted without hesitation, and despite the fact that she would enjoy a privileged position at the Tuileries, despite too the satisfaction a woman always experiences at seeing another thrust aside on her account, the fair Juliette *did* hesitate.

In the meanwhile the Princess Caroline, by way of supporting her case, said that, besides the personal pleasure which Madame Récamier's consent would afford her, the arrangement contemplated would have the additional advantage of not arousing the jealousy of the Empress. As a matter of fact, Josephine could never see the Emperor talking to a pretty woman without misgiving, and what in Heaven's name would she be likely to say if they appointed *dame du palais* a

woman whom she did not ask for, and one who by reason of her beauty, her youth and her pre-eminent social and conversational gifts could not but awaken her jealousy?

Shortly afterwards they began to talk about the theatre. Princess Murat remarked to Madame Récamier that she frequently saw her at the play, and added, "But which theatre do you like best?"

"Oh, the Comédie-Française, especially when Talma is playing."

"Do let me beg you to avail yourself of my box. It is on a level with the stage. You can go without dressing. Promise me you will use it."

Madame Récamier was unable to refuse so gracious an offer. She gave her promise, and the next morning the following note arrived:—

"NEUILLY, 22 *Vendémiaire.*

"Her Imperial Highness the Princess Caroline notifies the management of the Théâtre Français that from to-day's date until further orders her box will be at the disposal of Madame Récamier as well as of all who may present themselves with her or in her name. Even such members of the households of the Princesses as shall not have been admitted or invited by Madame Récamier shall henceforth be deprived of the right to claim admission.

"CH. DE LONGCHAMPS,
"Secrétaire des commandements de la
"Princesse Caroline."

Such were the means of which Napoleon availed himself in order to procure a meeting with Madame Récamier. He had been obliged to enlist the good offices of Fouché and of his sister Caroline to prepare

his way and to bring about a *rencontre* at the theatre. The Emperor doubtless proposed, subject to the manner in which his glances were received, to press his two negotiators again into service, conceiving that all that would then remain for them to do would be to complete the arrangements for the young woman's entry into the Tuileries.

Whatever the cause—love, vanity, or policy—he must certainly have greatly longed for her to have employed such elaborate diplomacy to bring about his object.

In accordance with the promise she had given to Princess Caroline, Madame Récamier went to the Théâtre Français. It must be borne in mind that the Princess's box was just opposite the Emperor's. "Madame Récamier occupied the box on two occasions, and whether by accident or design the Emperor was present on both of them. He gazed through his opera-glasses with marked persistence at his fair *vis-à vis*, and of course the courtiers, who never allowed their master's slightest movements to escape them, could not fail to seize on the circumstance. They concluded, and bruited it abroad, that Madame Récamier was to be honoured with a mark of high favour."[1]

Nevertheless the fair Juliette delayed her decision regarding the offer that had been made her. She was doubtless still thinking the matter over when one morning Fouché put in an appearance at Clichy. His face was beaming and his eye triumphant. "Ah, Madame," said he, "now, at length, you will make up your mind, for it is *I* no longer, but the Emperor

[1] *Souvenirs et correspondance de Madame Récamier*, Vol. I.

himself, who offers you the post of *dame du palais.*" Then he bowed, and leaving Madame Récamier to her reflections joined a group of her admirers.

Madame Récamier then considered it her duty to make known the Emperor's proposals to her husband. Now the least interfering, the least self-assertive individual at Clichy was Monsieur Récamier himself, who bore in this respect a striking resemblance to the spouse of Madame Geoffrin, and indeed to the majority of married men. He left his wife perfectly free to do as she wished in the matter. She again sought the counsels of her friends, and refused. Fouché was highly indignant and indulged, it appears, in some very whole-hearted abuse of the young woman's friends, whom he accused, not without reason, of having dictated her reply, and it was to Mathieu de Montmorency that he ascribed the major share of the blame.

Such then was the fate of these negotiations. The Emperor, who shared with Fouché the idea that the refusal of his offer was due to pressure brought to bear by the Royalists, was considerably annoyed. The idea that she had declined on conscientious or moral grounds did not for a moment enter his head, for he was well aware, from secret-service reports, that her virtue was a mere veneer, a pretence assumed in order to give an added zest to the favours she was by no means backward in granting to her more fortunate admirers. He therefore regarded Madame Récamier's decision as a personal affront. It was owing to this refusal which betokened her Royalist sympathies, and not to her friendship for Madame de Staël, still less, as some have averred, because he was jealous of the

renown of her wit and beauty, that he abstained in 1806 from raising a finger to save the Maison Récamier from ruin. It is not, however, the explanation he gives in the *Mémorial.* There he goes so far as to say that he did not care for Madame Récamier. But this very denial is surely a proof of the contrary. "I am not in the least enamoured of Madame Récamier," he told Junot, when the latter was trying to awaken his interest in the critical situation of the banking establishment of the fair Juliette's husband, "and I should certainly not think of coming to the assistance of merchants who spend six hundred thousand francs a year on their houses."

Napoleon was right enough; nevertheless, if Madame Récamier had accepted the position of *dame du palais*, we can scarcely suppose that he would have acted and spoken as he did. In fact, it is a thousand to one he would not have done so, and then Monsieur Récamier's bank would not have closed its doors. Napoleon was never lacking in generosity towards women. He was as liberal with his own wife as he was with other people's—as liberal with Josephine, for whom he paid off every year debts amounting to some million francs, as with Madame Fourès, whom he maintained on a very lavish scale as long as the Empire existed. Still it is a matter for regret that a motive of personal pique should have entered into his refusal to render aid to an imprudent banker who in order to pander to his wife's vanity and ambition recklessly squandered his resources by placing at her disposal and at that of the *grands seigneurs*, her friends, all, and more than all, the profits of his business. Later on, indeed, when

Napoleon sent Madame Récamier into exile, it was doubtless the personal resentment he felt at her refusal to enter the Imperial Household that impelled him towards such an arbitrary measure, though a contributory motive may perhaps be found in the ill-will that Fouché bore her on account of the check she gave to the negotiations, which he had probably assured the Emperor were certain to be crowned with success.

His anxiety to establish relations with Madame Récamier by no means prevented him from falling in love, *en passant*, with a pretty face whenever he happened to meet one. And in order that such meetings might be a matter of certainty and not of chance, he decided shortly after the Coronation to appoint *demoiselles d'annonce* to attend on the Empress. "But appointing four *demoiselles d'annonce* was not the whole of the business—the difficulty was to find them duties to perform. In order to give them the appearance of usefulness, it was arranged that they should be stationed in the room adjoining the Empress's bedchamber when she was occupying it and, when the Emperor came to visit her, it was they who opened the door for him. It was these duties of the *demoiselles d'annonce* that caused Madame de la Rochefoucauld to refer to them as *huissiers femelles*."[1] The aides-de-camp and orderly officers gave them a nickname more strictly appropriate to the actual duties they were called on to perform as servants of the Emperor. "Candidates for the post were all selected from among young and pretty women, and occasionally they attracted Napoleon's attention. Whether his wife knew

[1] Mademoiselle Avrillon, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 111.

of these affairs or not, depended on what he was pleased to tell her, but she never upset herself about them."[1]

Among these *demoiselles d'annonce* there was one "the daughter of a *huissier* in Napoleon's office who was passably good-looking and had attracted to herself the transient regard of her Sovereign."[2] It was these women, and possibly certain others besides, whom Madame de Rémusat had in mind when she said "that a man such as Napoleon had rarely the time or the inclination to think much of love, and that the Empress used to forgive him all those little peccadillos with which men are sometimes wont to replace the real passion. She even went so far as to encourage some of his passing fancies, becoming his confidante in such matters and schooling herself to regard them without annoyance."[3]

It is the duty of History to make mention of lapses such as these, without, however, by any means displaying towards them the benevolent indulgence of the Empress, his wife. Joseph de Maistre, the celebrated Christian philosopher, refuses to apply the title of "Great" to Napoleon because, as he affirms, he had no morals, and certain it is that if a man's claim to esteem depends upon the control he exercises over his senses and his passions, Napoleon had no such claim. He might justly have applied to himself the language he one day employed towards someone whom he was reproaching for not correcting his avowed faults.

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 302.
[2] Mademoiselle Avrillon, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 110.
[3] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 302.

"When, sir, one has a moral ailment one should tend one's soul just as one treats an injured arm or leg."[1] Napoleon's precept was better than his example. The trouble he took to conceal his amours is proof that he recognised his weakness even when giving way to it. Had he been of stronger moral fibre he would not merely have attempted to hide his proclivities, he would have resisted and battled with them. A man's passions are only a source of strength to him when he is their master and not their slave, and when he directs their course towards what is good and morally beautiful; otherwise they are but weaknesses.

Napoleon, notwithstanding the beautiful sentiments he was never weary of professing, was, where women were concerned, just as easily led as any man. He had, however, this great merit, and we have noted it before, he never allowed a woman to dominate his policy. He followed the path he had mapped out for himself and none ever gained such power over him as to cause him to turn aside a hair's-breadth. Did he not, moreover, say to Madame de Rémusat, "Love is not for me. For what is love? It is a passion that beholds and is interested in nothing in the whole universe but the beloved object, and I certainly am not one to carry exclusiveness to such a point as that."[2]

He was forgetting what he had been—for what could have been more exclusive than his passion for Josephine? When he spoke in that strain Napoleon was setting himself up as a man far above the failings of ordinary mortals, whereas the fact was that he had showered all

[1] *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, Vol. IV, p. 248.
[2] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 265.

his treasure of love upon Josephine and since she left his passion unrequited he sought for nothing now save mere temporary distractions. It was again somewhat in the same manner that he said to Madame de Rémusat, "I have always had a taste for analysis and if I fell seriously in love I should dissect my passion bit by bit. 'Why' and 'how' are such useful questions that we cannot put them to ourselves too often."[1] Such, however, had not always been his own practice. But if one were to follow out such an idea and laboriously pull to pieces a passion, real or supposed, with the laudable intention of taking only reason and duty for one's guide, it would not be often that love would survive such a coldly judicial investigation of its origin and tendencies. If he had but set himself thus to analyse his feelings not only in the case of every fleeting fancy, but even in that of his love for Josephine, with the same ardour as he abandoned himself to the feelings themselves, and if he had acted in accordance with the conclusions that would have resulted from such an analysis, how vastly different would have been his life's story. He would have found that his one pure affection was for Mademoiselle du Colombier and that she it was whom he ought to have made his wife. Would he not have been happy, calmly and serenely happy with her, and as trifling causes are often the precursors of great events, would not France herself have been happier too? The marriage with the Archduchess would never have taken place; there would have been no invasion, and the march of events in France and in Europe would have followed a totally

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 268.

different course. But rarely do we meet men endowed with sufficient strength of character, sufficient mastery over themselves to put their theories into practice—theories such as a man forms when no mistress, no designing friend is at hand to warp his better judgment—men who are able, when the crisis comes, to square their conduct with their principles. Napoleon lacked the training, the careful culture of heart and soul that only a high-minded father and mother can impart, a culture which grows to perfection of its own accord in a distinguished and refined environment. It was a part of his destiny—and a natural consequence of the widespread corruption amid which his early manhood was passed—that he should be deceived by the first coquette sufficiently versed in the art of seduction to awaken his passion and sufficiently unscrupulous to take advantage of it to make him marry her. True his love swiftly burnt itself out, but for that we must bear in mind Josephine herself was to blame. She had known how to kindle his love, but she knew not how to fan the flame and finally she had been witless enough to extinguish it altogether. When Napoleon learnt of his wife's unfaithfulness, when his eyes were opened to the true character of the woman he had loved, his eager boyish trust gave way to bitterness and rancour—because he had been unfortunate in his choice of a wife and because she had played him false, he imagined that all women were like her. Judging all women by those whom he saw about him, by his sisters, the ladies-in-waiting, the wives of certain Councillors of State, Ministers and Generals, he came to the conclusion that feminine virtue had no real existence, that women were

simply intended to minister to man's pleasure as his fancy or his temperament might dictate, and that for the remainder of the time they were to be left to amuse themselves with dress, pet dogs and gossip.

People often indulge in generalisations for the purpose of justifying to others and to themselves the manner in which they conducted themselves in certain particular cases, and their common tendency in such instances is to take their failings for principles. But a man of character, a strong-souled man, maps out his line of conduct and nothing can make him deviate from it. With regard to Napoleon, his pre-eminent rank and the etiquette that hedged him round were obstacles in the way of a genuine attachment. At the Tuileries there was no time for making love, and, besides, there were too many embarrassing witnesses. The routine of the Imperial Court was a sort of maelström which swept everybody along willy-nilly in a certain appointed and inevitable course. Its torrent was the swifter in Napoleon's own case. He could only afford time to pay the briefest of visits to the Empress's gatherings; a host of affairs—the affairs of all Europe—were upon his shoulders and compelled him to return to work without delay. Napoleon was therefore right in saying, "Love is not for me. . . ." Where he was wrong was in surrounding himself with all those readers and waiting-women, faulty specimens of Love's mint, salaried wantons every one of them, who in the long run displayed humanity to him in a false and venal light and made him mistake the exception for the rule. However, he attached no importance to these whims, these *passades* as Madame de Rémusat

calls them, and he spoke of them to his wife as though he were disinterestedly discussing the escapades of a third party. "The Empress," we are told by her principal lady-in-waiting, "was jealous to excess, but she liked nevertheless to have young and pretty women about her. Of course this was putting temptation in her husband's way, and when, as she might have anticipated, he paid undue attention to any of them she took it ill, and this occasionally resulted in serious domestic discord. However, sentiment had no part in any of these little amours; they were merely passing fancies which he had no difficulty in laying aside in order to banish his wife's jealousy—indeed, he went farther, and when the Empress used to tell me about it I could not help signifying my strong disapproval for he told her more than she wanted to know, referring openly to this or that secret imperfection in a woman; and when making a confession about one woman, he would gratuitously make reference to another who was not under discussion at all, but who, it appeared, had refused him none of her favours."[1]

On this point the statement of Josephine's *femme de chambre* is borne out by Madame de Rémusat and it was apparently one of Napoleon's failings that when relating to Josephine the particulars of a *liaison* with a woman he was tired of, "he did not hesitate to go into details about the secret perfections or imperfections of her body."[2] Still we must not lose sight of the fact that both the *femme de chambre* and Madame de Rémusat derived their information regarding this alleged defect

[1] Mademoiselle Avrillon, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 199.
[2] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 207.

of Napoleon's character from Josephine. Though their veracity is doubtless beyond question, it is the Empress's that is open to doubt, for when put out she had no compunction about inventing all sorts of odious calumnies concerning her husband and repeating them afterwards as though they were incontestable facts. Did not Madame d'Abrantès herself declare that Josephine lied to the top of her bent? After all, it is possible that the main object of Josephine's inventions was to discourage her ladies-in-waiting from yielding to a lover possessed of so indiscreet a tongue.

It was about this time that Napoleon had, according to popular report, some short-lived relations with Mademoiselle Mars. There is no direct evidence about the matter and it is possible that the following anecdote is responsible for the legend, a legend which in the eyes of the Royalists was confirmed at the Restoration by the affection which the great actress retained for the Emperor's memory.

> "It was a common occurrence for several regiments of the guard to be reviewed by the Emperor on Sunday in the courtyard of the Tuileries. On one of these occasions the Emperor caught sight of Mademoiselle Mars in the crowd, and spurring his horse past the cordon of guards who were keeping the space clear, addressed her with the utmost graciousness of manner. 'So you are returning the visits which it gives us so much pleasure to pay you at the Théâtre-Français.'
>
> "This incident drew the attention of all the spectators and of the officers of the Emperor's staff to Mademoiselle Mars, and in spite of her professional sang-froid she was at a loss for a reply."[1]

[1] *Mémoires d'un bourgeois de Paris*, Vol. I.



MADEMOISELLE MARS
From the Collection of A. M. Broadley, Esq.

It has also been said that the name "Mars" played no small part in the conquest of the man who proved himself such a brilliant rival to the original bearer of the name. But all that may be merely idle gossip, and we must beware of attaching too much importance to it.

CHAPTER VII

Napoleon's journey to Italy—He falls in love with a *lectrice*—Josephine becomes jealous and sends home "la petite Lacoste"—How the Emperor makes her amends—An incident at Stupinigi—Madame Ida Saint-Elme—Madame Gazzani; rivalry and jealousy in the palace—Josephine endeavours to catch her with the Emperor—Napoleon and the Queen of Bavaria—Eléonore Denuelle de la Plaigne, reader to the Princess Caroline—She bears a son to the Emperor—Stéphanie de Beauharnais—The Emperor takes a fancy to her—Some incidents of this affair—Stéphanie's reckless behaviour—Her marriage; the Princess refuses to see her husband—A strange honeymoon—Bonaparte takes a dislike to her—End of the flirtation.

IN the early days of April 1805—the 2nd, to speak precisely—the Emperor left Paris for Italy. He was accompanied by the Empress, while Madame de la Rochefoucauld her *dame d'honneur*, Madame d'Arberg, Madame de Serrant, and Madame Savary were among those in attendance. The retinue also included a great many chamberlains, officers of high rank, *dames d'annonce*, and even *lectrices*. The object of the journey was the Emperor's coronation at Milan as King of Italy.

It was a triumphal progress. At Lyons particularly the popular ovations were so enthusiastic that the Emperor was deeply affected by them. But as he loved rapid travelling he stopped but little *en route* except at Stupinigi, in Piedmont.

There, about two or three leagues from Turin was a little château, scarcely more than a hunting-box,

which had formerly been the pleasure resort of the kings of Sardinia, and here they remained a few days. His feelings of satisfaction, added to the exhilarating influence of the rapid change of scene, doubtless had the effect of inflaming the Emperor's desires, for he did not omit to observe that one of the Empress's readers, Mademoiselle Lacoste, was the possessor of the bluest of eyes and the fairest of skins. It was only quite recently that she had entered the Imperial service. "She was a penniless orphan and had been brought up by an aunt, who was said to be a very designing woman. Without being able to boast of any extraordinary beauty, she was decidedly attractive, although slightly too thin and rather too self-possessed. Still she was perfectly proportioned and had very fine fair hair. She was, moreover, of an exceedingly gentle disposition, and had received an excellent education, uniting with considerable wit a fund of alluring gaiety."[1]

In the palace, the accommodation of which was somewhat inadequate for the Imperial Court, the Emperor had lost no time in discovering this pretty blonde with her happy laugh, who, for her part, was far from anxious to hide her attractions under a bushel. The reader did not drop her gaze when he looked at her, and a tacit agreement had already been arrived at by ocular telegraphy when, at Milan, the Emperor definitely conveyed to her that he was anxious to render his homage. Mademoiselle Lacoste did not regard it as her duty to waste her time or the hero's by any display of coyness, and replied that so far

[1] Mademoiselle Avrillon, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p 205.

as she was concerned she was perfectly ready to welcome both him and his attentions. The whole business had been carried through at break-neck pace and the completest harmony had been attained, when all at once it became necessary to sing a different tune.

We are acquainted with the Empress's disagreeable habit of getting her waiting-women to spy on her husband's doings, but in addition to these, "certain ladies of the Court who were trying to catch the Emperor at his gallantries in the hope of getting into the Empress's good books, had recently tormented her with their scheming revelations,"[1] and debased themselves to the level of her paid spies. Thus it happened that the Empress quickly got to know of her husband's latest peccadillo. The opportunity for a scene was too favourable for Josephine to miss. Although he was in the wrong, the Emperor gave way before her upbraidings, and the fact that he was frank enough to confess his fault and to make amends for it proves that he was not so essentially corrupt as might have been imagined. These little infidelities were not fraught with any great consequences. Mademoiselle Avrillon, who had perceived the love-glances that had passed between the Emperor and the youthful reader, had taken good care to say nothing about the matter to the Empress, for as she said, "If Mademoiselle Lacoste had been dismissed on no more solid grounds than those of mere suspicion, she would only have transferred her jealousy to someone else, and nothing would have been gained."[2]

[1] Mademoiselle Avrillon, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 206.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 204.

That does not imply a very favourable view of the Sovereign's entourage or of the Sovereign himself. Nevertheless Napoleon repaired right royally the injury he had caused to the girl's reputation. Josephine had persuaded him to agree to her being sent away on the spot. In the end, however, although he consented to her dismissal, "she was not," we are informed by Josephine's *femme de chambre*, "packed off with the promptitude that had been observed in other similar instances." Napoleon was anxious to save her face and caused a communication to be sent to the young woman's aunt (to whose designing nature this check following upon such a brilliant opening must have been extremely galling) to come and fetch her niece. Moreover, Napoleon, who saw eye to eye with Louis XIV in these matters, was of opinion that a woman who had given herself to him certainly deserved some "honour" in compensation for the honour which she had lost. He therefore demanded that the lovely offender should be included amongst the guests at one of Josephine's grand receptions. "What," protested the Empress, altogether horrified, "a mere *lectrice* among my guests! Such a proceeding is unheard of—consider the etiquette of the thing!" However, she was glad enough after all to display an accommodating spirit on this point, since her rival's entrance to her reception was to be the signal of her departure from her service. But she unburdened herself of her troubles to all her ladies and *femmes de chambre*, a circumstance to which we are indebted for the details of this *amourette de voyage*. Nor did the Emperor suffer the little Lacoste to depart without a handsome recompense. He gave

her a dowry, and it was this dowry and also perhaps the fact that she had enjoyed the *honour* of being marked out by the Emperor that swiftly brought her a husband. He, it appears, was a financier, possessed of more money than scruples.

Despite these minor hitches in the course of connubial fidelity, the Imperial household, according to contemporary testimony, was not an unhappy one, though Madame de Rémusat, whose notions regarding the duties of a husband towards his wife were more severe than other people's, expresses a dissentient opinion and furnishes us with some interesting details regarding the counter-effects the Emperor's marital derelictions had on his behaviour in the domestic circle.

"I invariably observed that as soon as Bonaparte became taken up with another woman his manner towards his own wife grew harsh, violent and pitiless. Whether it was that his despotic nature found it inexplicable that his wife should refuse to concede him that independence of restraint which he claimed exclusively for himself, or whether it was because Nature had endowed him so niggardly with the capacity for loving that it was entirely absorbed by the favourite of the moment, without leaving even a shred of kindness for any other woman, it is impossible to say. At all events he quickly betrayed to her his almost savage astonishment that she should stand in the way of his abandoning himself to distractions which he demonstrated, with almost mathematical precision, were in his case alike permissible and necessary. 'I am not like other men,' he used to

say, 'and the laws of morality and propriety were not made for me.'"[1]

If he said such things—and their authenticity reposes solely on the suspicious basis of his wife's stories—he must have said them in the heat of his anger when he found himself detected by Josephine or dogged by her spies. He knew perfectly well that the restrictions of morality and propriety were as binding on him as on any other man, for that is proved by his anxiety to escape observation whenever he wished to evade them. Nevertheless the difficulties used to be settled amicably. The Emperor would point out to Josephine that she had no right to take high moral ground, while she, from dread of a divorce, would hold her peace. She contented herself with weeping, knowing that tears always acted most powerfully on Napoleon, and later on she doubtless became thoroughly convinced that her husband was indeed superior to any moral code, since, as we have seen, she assisted him in his *liaisons* and even made friends of his mistresses.

It has been alleged by some that Mademoiselle Lacoste was not the only woman to lure Napoleon from the path of conjugal fidelity during this Italian journey. In the course of the few days he spent at the little château of Stupinigi—whether before or after he had noticed the pretty reader we cannot say—he played a part in a singular little adventure which shows that if Napoleon was of a fickle disposition, the ladies of his Court were scarcely less so. The incident is related in Constant's Memoirs, or rather in the chapter which concludes them, the authorship of which is generally

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 206.

attributed to M. de Villemarest, ex-secretary to the Prince Borghese. Villemarest is also responsible for a portion of Bourrienne's Memoirs and for the Souvenirs of Blangini. He was intimately acquainted with all that went on in Napoleon's Court and domestic circle, and was in the secret of all the scandals, major and minor, of the establishments of the princes and princesses. Though some of his tales are to be accepted with reserve, the following must certainly be included in a book dealing with the amours of Napoleon. The story is decidedly entertaining, and it would be as unfair to deprive the reader of the anecdote altogether as to alter the manner of its telling. It is therefore appended word for word, and the reader may believe or disbelieve what he chooses of it.

"It was on the occasion of the Emperor's coronation as King of Italy, when he was staying at the Palace of Stupinigi, that I had to give up my bedroom there to one of Josephine's ladies-in-waiting. The Emperor was in possession of a key which opened every door in the place. One night he went into the room of the lady in question carrying a dark lantern. Seating himself in front of the fireplace, he proceeded to light the candles. Alas, the fair one was not alone. Why, I know not—possibly she was afraid of the mice which were a regular plague at Stupinigi. Anyhow, one of the Emperor's aides-de-camp happened to be in bed with her. As soon as he heard the key turn in the lock he concluded that the Emperor was the only person likely to make his appearance at such an hour, so out he jumped, dragging with him under the bed everything he could clutch that might lead to his discovery. The Emperor approached the lovely dame, who was pretending to be asleep, when *horresco referens!* his eye lighted upon nothing more nor less than those articles

of apparel which Louvet, in deference to the susceptibilities of polite society, has so happily christened 'indispensables' (for who would have the hardihood bluntly to refer to them as 'trousers'? certainly not I). One can imagine the Emperor with his eyes fixed on the tell-tale garments. As soon as he realised their significance, he said in a calm but severe tone, 'There is a man here. Whoever you are, I command you to come forth and show yourself.' Evasion was impossible; there was nothing for it but to obey; and the Emperor on recognising his aide-de-camp merely said, 'Dress yourself.' The aide-de-camp dressed himself and went. To my great regret I do not know what took place afterwards between the Emperor and the lady, but there is every reason to suppose that she began by trying to convince him that his deductions were at fault.[1] All I can say for certain is that the next day, when the time came to appear in public, the aide-de-camp was going about in a state of great agitation wearing his bedroom slippers, and that he did so because he had no choice. He got off with a fright, for the Emperor never said a word to lead him to suppose that he remembered what had taken place in my room at Stupinigi."[2]

Fact or fiction, no one will regret having read the story.

We must not omit to mention, in connexion with this Italian journey, that an adventuress named Madame Ida Saint-Elme claims to have accorded her favours to the Emperor on two occasions at Milan, but no reliance can be placed on the incidents recounted in her name in the eight volumes which compose the

[1] This *mot* recalls the story of the woman who said one day to her husband in similar circumstances, "No, you do not love me, since you believe what you see and not what I tell you."

[2] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. IV, p. 452.

Mémoires d'une contemporaine. The work, which was merely a publisher's venture, was jointly compiled by a certain Monsieur Lesourd, ex-sub-prefect of Sceaux, Monsieur Malitourne and Monsieur Charles Nodier; it further contains a few chapters from a book by Monsieur de Villemarest. It is really nothing but a tissue of mystery and make-believe, although one stumbles occasionally across a fact amid a hotchpotch of baseless fabrications. We need not therefore waste time over the statements made therein regarding the Emperor's amours with Madame Ida Saint-Elme.

The distractions in which Napoleon thus indulged in the course of his journey did not in the least interfere with the performance of his duties as a Sovereign. He was present at all the various functions and issued the proclamations necessary for the maintenance of public order and the due administration of the newly founded kingdom; nor did he leave Milan till he had set everything in working order. Ostensibly for pleasure, he undertook a journey, the real object of which was to carry out a reconnaissance of the forces which the Austrians were secretly massing along the banks of the Adige. Thereafter he set out on his return to France.

At Genoa the most magnificent receptions were given in his honour. It would be out of place to describe them here; we need only record that it was on this occasion that the beautiful Madame Gazzani made her first appearance before the Emperor. In every city through which the Emperor and Empress passed, it was the rule to appoint certain ladies of the locality to attend upon Their Majesties. These ladies were not

drawn exclusively from the noble houses; beauty was also a passport to the honour, and amongst those selected on the latter account must be included Madame Gazzani. The daughter of an actress or danseuse, she was a resident of Genoa and in a city renowned for the beauty of its women she shone fairest among the fair.

"I do not think," writes one of her own sex, "that I have ever beheld in all my life a face more perfectly sweet. There was something so bewitching about her that no one, not even a woman, could help casting a lingering look of admiration upon her, and the more closely one scrutinised her features the more thoroughly did her beauty enthrall one. Her eyes were of velvety softness and seemed to be animated by a sweet angelic radiance, and there was something indefinably caressing in her expression. A magnetic spell fell upon all who gazed at her. She was tall and graceful, though her figure was not so remarkable as her face, and it would have been well had it been a trifle fuller. . . . To realise how ravishingly beautiful a woman may be one ought to have seen Madame Gazzani in her *mezzaro*."[1]

Madame de Rémusat unites her testimony with that of Mademoiselle Avrillon. "Never," says she, "have I beheld more beautiful eyes, more delicate features or a more perfect blend of loveliness. She was then pre-eminent for beauty in a court which harboured so many fair women."

It was not necessary for the Emperor to see Madame Gazzani in her *mezzaro* to be dazzled by her charms. On the pretext, no doubt, of conciliating the national

[1] Mademoiselle Avrillon, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 45, and Vol. I, p. 240.

sentiment, he appointed certain Italians to offices at his Court. Thus Madame Gazzani was added to the Empress's staff of readers. It was fortunate that Josephine never called upon her to discharge her duties, for the new reader, whose French left much to be desired, would have had much ado to negotiate even the simplest passage. But the Emperor had no intention of putting her through her paces. His sole object being to turn the pages of the Book of Love with her, it little concerned him whether she knew French or not. She spoke Italian and so did he, and, since Italian is the language of love, they doubtless arrived at an understanding.

It was Monsieur de Talleyrand who, in his eagerness to propitiate his master, had been desirous of providing him with a mistress by prevailing on him to give Madame Gazzani a post about the Empress, so that the Emperor himself might have her within his reach. It happened that a readership had just fallen vacant in consequence of Mademoiselle Lacoste's departure. Nothing therefore could have been more fortunate, for Madame Gazzani would fill her place. The appointment was made and the lovely Italian, having rejoined the Court at Paris shortly after the Emperor's return, formally assumed her duties.

To begin with, her position at the palace was not a little equivocal. The Emperor, who had already set etiquette at naught in causing Mademoiselle Lacoste to be introduced at the Empress's reception, desired further to defy the established order of things in favour of her successor. He stipulated that she should be allowed to present herself in company with the *dames*

du palais in what was called—why, we cannot say—the *salon d'honneur*. This innovation gave rise to much indignation and jealousy. Madame Gazzani, however, could not be kept at arm's length simply because she was the Sovereign's mistress. It would have ill become Madame Duchâtel, for example, to adopt such an attitude. They found their excuse therefore in her undistinguished origin and in her humble rank of reader, and there was no humiliation that the ladies of the palace did not endeavour to inflict on her. But is it to an exaggerated conception of the honourable scruples which cause pure women to avoid those who are not so stainless that we are to ascribe the action of these charitable ladies in boycotting the Emperor's new mistress? Such a supposition would argue a very imperfect acquaintance with them. The truth is that they concealed beneath a mask of sham respectability a state of mind the very reverse of honourable ; they were, in fact, inordinately jealous. They could not endure her irresistible beauty, and when, at the grand receptions, Madame Gazzani took her place in the neighbourhood of the Empress those near her arose with affected indignation, as though their virtue had been contaminated by contact with a woman whom they accused of being so slenderly endowed with that quality. Such conduct was certainly not a shining example of Christian charity ; but then how uncharitable it was of Madame Gazzani to be so lovely and to put them all in the shade! That was the head and front of her offending ; they could not forgive her for being so crushingly beautiful.

At first Madame Gazzani was hurt at the manner in which the Court ladies treated her, but she soon learned

the real reasons of her ostracism. She acted as though nothing were the matter and bore every affront with imperturbable gentleness, till, little by little, jealousies died down, the gaps on either side of her were occupied, friendships sprang up and the boycott was over. Still we must not pay these ladies the compliment of supposing that this change in their tactics was dictated by kindness of heart. Reflexion had shown them that it was policy to play into the hands of a woman on such good terms with the Emperor, a woman who, through him, had such power for good or evil. It is a melancholy commentary on the honour of our kind that it was this scarcely creditable motive which brought about a reconciliation between Madame Gazzani and the women whose hypocritical assumption of virtue had caused them to shun her like a pestilence.

The Empress, though by no means in the dark concerning her husband's *liaison* with *la belle Génoise* as she was called, treated her with the utmost kindness and goodwill. True she had at first been alarmed at being called upon to include such a celebrated beauty among her readers, fearing lest she might gain a dangerous ascendency over the Emperor. However, she thought it best to keep her anxiety to herself and "pretty promptly made up her mind to acquiesce in a state of affairs to which it might have been impossible for her to show any prolonged antagonism, and this time she shut her eyes to what was going on."[1] But she did not arrive at this determination without a struggle. Despite its discouraging results in the past she still possessed the unhappy desire of spying on her

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 241.

husband's doings, and took it into her head to surprise the Emperor with Madame Gazzani as she had done in the case of Madame Duchâtel, Mademoiselle Georges and the rest. Such a course was both ill-advised and useless, for since she was unwilling to leave her husband and had no hopes of regaining his affections, her action could not but have the effect of embittering her relations with him. But Josephine invariably acted upon impulse. She determined therefore to watch till the Emperor and Madame Gazzani were alone together, for she had quite made up her mind to take them by surprise. It happened that her opportunity soon came, and a singular little domestic "scene" was the result.

"One day," says Constant, "the Emperor had a rendezvous with the lady in the little suite of apartments and he commanded me to remain in his room and to tell anybody who asked for him, even though it were Her Majesty the Empress, that he was engaged in his study with a Minister of State.

"The scene of the interview was the set of rooms formerly occupied by Monsieur de Bourrienne, the staircase of which led into His Majesty's bed-chamber. These rooms had been fitted up and decorated very plainly. There was another exit on to the staircase, called the black staircase because it was dark and ill-lighted, and this way it was that Madame Gazzani was just coming in. The Emperor had gone out by the first-named exit to meet her. They had not been together more than a moment or so when Her Majesty walked into the Emperor's room and asked me what her husband was doing. 'Madame,' I replied, 'the Emperor is very busy at the moment; he is in his study with a Minister of State.' 'Constant, I must enter.' 'Impossible, Madame,' was my reply; 'I have received explicit

instructions not to disturb His Majesty even for Her Majesty the Empress.' Thereupon she withdrew in displeasure, in anger rather. Half an hour later she returned, and as she renewed her request I had no alternative but to repeat my answer. I was grieved to see Her Majesty so vexed, but I could not prove false to my trust. The same evening, as he was undressing, the Emperor sternly remarked that Her Majesty had declared that I had told her he was locked in with a lady when she came to seek him. I replied quite unconcernedly that he certainly could not believe such a thing as that. 'No,' he replied, resuming the friendly tone with which he customarily honoured me, 'I know you well enough to be assured of your discretion, but woe betide the fools who let their tongues wag, if I succeed in discovering them.'"[1]

As a matter of fact, everyone's tongue was wagging, for the Emperor's *liaison* with "la belle Génoise" was a secret from no one. But Madame Gazzani had the good taste to give herself no airs concerning her privileged position at the palace, and if she showed her triumph, it must have been in private. "She was of gentle disposition, submissive rather than content, and she yielded to her Imperial master from a sort of conviction that she ought not to oppose his wishes."[2] It was perhaps because her husband shared this conviction—not the only thing he shared, by the way—that he accepted the post of Treasurer-General of the Department of the Eure. Like his lovely consort, his one guiding principle was that the Emperor ought not to be opposed; hence he allowed himself to be made a Treasurer-General as well as—the other thing.

[1] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 40.
[2] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 241.

Beautiful as Madame Gazzani was, Napoleon's affection for her was never of the keenest. It scarcely endured more than a couple of years, and even so, Constant informs us, they only met at comparatively rare intervals. As in the case of his other relationships with the sex, Napoleon let Josephine into the secret, and this was an indication that the intrigue was drawing to an end. Just as he had done where Madame Duchâtel and the rest were concerned, "he disclosed to her all the details of this half-hearted *liaison*." As for Monsieur de Talleyrand, who had acted as purveyor, "he was entrusted with an account of the pleasure, more or less, which the lady had afforded him."[1] Such a proceeding certainly does not point to any excessive delicacy, and consequently not to any great depth of feeling on Napoleon's part, and Madame de Rémusat was horrified at a want of reticence which, as a matter of fact, is by no means uncommon among men. When woman is their topic they are very communicative, and the more piquant they can make their stories the better they are pleased. When their mistresses are out of earshot they consider it rather good form to talk off-handedly about their love affairs. If their mistresses knew how they were discussed, there would be more virtuous women in the world and, as a consequence, more virtuous men. But where women were in question, Napoleon was as great an offender as the rest.

As long as Madame Gazzani was in favour she displayed no animosity against anyone, and did her best to obtain forgiveness alike for her beauty and her un-

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 243.

orthodox conduct. At the Court people were far from treating her with indifference, but whether the desire to show her sympathy or to truckle to the Emperor was their motive is at least an open question. One result of the presence of the fair Genoese was to create a vogue in Italian dances, and there was not a single piano in the Tuileries on which Italian music was not played every day.

Nevertheless Madame Gazzani's position at the Court was comparatively humble. In order to give some appearance of usefulness to a reader who never had any reading to do, in order too that she might at least have some sort of duties to perform, the Emperor decided that she should have the custody of the Empress's diamonds. As a matter of fact, however, this duty never actually fell to her lot, and the key of Josephine's jewels remained in Mademoiselle Avrillon's hands, an arrangement which was the more convenient inasmuch as the latter was always within call of her mistress, whose favourite amusement it was to display her jewels to her ladies and the people who came to see her.

During the period which immediately followed the return from the Coronation in Italy, the Emperor had scant leisure to bestow on his new favourite. War with Prussia soon broke out to bear him away from Paris, and he departed to win undying glory on the fields of Iéna and Friedland.

Here it becomes necessary to retrace our steps a little. On his way home from Austerlitz after a campaign in which love apparently found no place—the rapidity of his marches and his multifarious labours

hardly permitting it—he remained for a time at Munich. He had just elevated the Electorate of Bavaria to the dignity of a kingdom, and in return for his throne and the increase of his territory, the King of Bavaria had agreed that his daughter Augusta should marry Josephine's son, who was to be Viceroy of Italy, although she was already affianced to the Hereditary Grand Duke of Baden. The latter, by way of compensation, was to receive the hand of Stéphanie de Beauharnais, the Empress's niece.

During the negotiation of these weighty matters, Napoleon, who had never displayed so much good humour—as was natural enough after his brilliant successes in the field—sought repose from his labours in a flirtation with the Queen of Bavaria. This intrigue, it has been said, was an affair partly of gallantry, partly of policy, though the former was probably the preponderating motive. The Queen of Bavaria, the King's second wife, was a young woman. Though not, strictly speaking, beautiful, she was well proportioned and possessed a certain elegance of carriage and great distinction and dignity of manner. This doubtless had an effect on Napoleon, for he showed a disposition to lay aside his bearishness and to soften a manner that occasionally savoured too strongly of the camp. He seemed very desirous of making a conquest; but the dignified tact with which the Queen held her Imperial suitor at a distance, the various formalities of complicated court etiquette of which she knew so well how to avail herself when occasion demanded to keep or to put him in his place, all served to exhaust Napoleon's patience. Accustomed as he was to taking both in-

dividuals and positions by storm, he could never get the better of that delicate, perfectly balanced tact against which his ardour hurled itself in vain. Weary of the struggle he at length abandoned the attack. Moreover Josephine, who had come to Munich for her son's marriage, began to display her jealous anxiety. She accused the Queen of Bavaria of coquetry, and by alleging one reason and another succeeded in persuading her husband to leave at an earlier date than he had originally intended.

Thus the victor of Austerlitz returned to Paris. There he was ogled more than ever by the women of the Tuileries. "The Imperial Court," writes one of the ablest historians of the times, "with all its brilliance, all its glory, had no claim to boast of the purity of its moral atmosphere. It was an admitted principle, and Josephine herself encouraged its observance, that no resistance should be offered to the Conqueror of Conquerors, and with a whole host of women it came to pass that the higher the price they set upon their attractions the more binding they considered their obligation to offer themselves for sacrifice."[1] And so the Emperor's entrance into the ball-room at the Tuileries was a sight to behold. Despite the little shudder of timidity that not unnaturally visited every woman who found herself in his path, the loveliest ladies of his court—and no court was ever more renowned for beauty—seemed by their gracious smiles to say—

> Ah! vous avez des droits superbes
> Comme seigneur de ce canton.

[1] Général Baron Thiébault, *Mémoires*, Vol. IV, p. 40.

It was not at the Tuileries alone that Napoleon served as a target for feminine glances. Whenever he visited the Princesses Imperial there was no lack of women desirous of attracting him, and all vied with one another in endeavouring to win his attention by their smiles and seductive glances. At the Princess Caroline's there was, among others, a young reader to whom Constant refers as Mademoiselle E——, but whose full name was Eléonore Denuelle de la Plaigne. She had received her education at Mademoiselle Campan's and was married from the house of that celebrated governess at St. Germain to one Revel, a captain in the 15th Dragoons. The marriage was not a happy one, and less than two years later her husband was convicted of forgery at the Criminal Court of the Department of the Seine et Oise and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. His young wife had already lodged a petition for divorce and obtained her decree on the 29th April 1806. She had left her husband some time previously and through Madame Campan's influence had secured an appointment as reader in the household of her former schoolfellow, Annunziata Bonaparte, who had become the Princess Caroline Murat. She was scarcely more than eighteen years of age, tall, slim, well set-up, graceful in her movements and endowed with a certain natural distinction of manner. Her hair was dark, her eyes also, and she knew how to give them an alluring expression to which her vivacity and coquetry imparted a magical effect. These lovely eyes of hers probably gazed more lingeringly on the Emperor than was befitting, whenever chance (which she well knew how to direct) placed her in her Sovereign's path. In the end,

as a result of frequent encounters and lingering side-long glances, Napoleon came to notice her. The young lady's little devices had not escaped the observation of the Princess Caroline. The latter, being a woman of the world, saw what was in the wind, and being also very keen—particularly in matters of this sort—and untroubled by any qualms of conscience, guessed that it might be to her advantage to further a flirtation between her brother and the pretty reader. It was a sure means of earning the Emperor's gratitude, for he never failed to reward adequately such *honourable* services.

So she set to work and, without disclosing her object, managed to foster and feed a spark that was only too ready to leap into flame. In a word, she brought much delicate diplomacy to bear on a not very delicate piece of business. Someone in her confidence conveyed the Emperor's proposals to Eléonore, who, no less keen than the Princess, accepted them on the spot. It was at the Tuileries that the Emperor received his latest conquest to begin with. She came secretly and remained as a rule only a short time, never more than two or three hours at the longest. Nor did the Emperor send for her frequently. One day our headstrong young lady discovered she was in the interesting condition. The Emperor thereupon took a little house for her in the Rue de la Victoire, formerly No. 29 Rue Chantereine. It is worthy of note that the Rue de la Victoire played an important part in the story of Napoleon's love affairs. It was there that he lived with Josephine before he married her, there too that he quartered Eléonore, and finally it was there that he afterwards installed Madame Walewska.

On the 13th December 1806, in the little house the Emperor had given her, Eléonore was delivered of a fine boy. He was christened simply Léon, and his birth certificate read as follows: "Son of Demoiselle Eléonore Denuel, aged twenty years, of independent means; father absent."[1]

In spite of his absence the father did not forget his child. He settled thirty thousand francs a year on him from the day of his birth, and the Princess Murat, who continued her good offices in the natural sequel of the love affair she had so skilfully conducted, handed the child over to the nurse of her son, Prince Achilles. This woman, whose name was Madame Loir, had him under her charge for three or four years. The Emperor then transferred him to M. de Méneval, one of his secretaries, to whom he entrusted his education. After his return from Elba the child was given into the care of Madame Mère. The worthy Méneval spared himself no pains to make him a useful member of society, but in vain. His disposition was wayward, indolent and ill-balanced, the caprice of the moment always triumphing over common sense, and in spite of a keen intelligence his life was a wasted one. He died only a few years ago after a most eventful career.

As for Eléonore, her *liaison* with the Emperor, to her great disappointment, soon came to an end. One day, during the memorable visit of the Emperor and his Court in the year 1807, she and her son arrived at Fontainebleau. She succeeded in reaching the Emperor's private apartments and asked Constant to announce her. The Emperor, who was only in the

[1] Ch. Nauroy, *Les secrets des Bonaparte*, p. 211.

habit of receiving people whom he had expressly summoned, was extremely annoyed at her action. Constant was therefore instructed to inform her that the Emperor forbade her ever to present herself before him without permission, and that she was to leave Fontainebleau instantly. The poor woman, who had counted on a very different reception, hurriedly obeyed.

Napoleon's disinclination to see the mother, who it must be confessed was a woman of little interest, was by no means extended to the son. He had a tender affection for him and frequently desired to see him. Constant, whose duty it usually was to fetch him, states in his Memoirs that Napoleon "indulged him with innumerable delicacies, and was greatly amused by his liveliness and his repartees, which were remarkably clever for his age." The Emperor used also to see him at his sister's, then Queen of Naples, whenever she visited Paris. She had him brought to the Elysée, where she resided, so that the Emperor was able to play with him as much as he liked. "In his will, Napoleon left him 72,000 francs a year, and in clause 37 of the instructions, dictated by him at St. Helena on the 24th April 1821, he expressed the following wish: 'I should not be displeased if little Léon became a magistrate, provided he has an inclination that way.' He had not. His sole inclination was to do nothing."[1]

Eléonore, who received from the Emperor an income of 22,000 francs a year, married again on the 4th February 1808; her second husband, we are informed by the learned M. Ch. Nauroy, being a M. Pierre Philippe Angier, an infantry lieutenant, who afterwards

[1] Ch. Nauroy, *Les secrets des Bonaparte*, p. 225.

became a captain in the Cuirassiers, and died in hospital at Marienburg in 1812, during the Russian campaign. Finally, in 1814, she took a third husband, Charles Auguste Emile Comte de Luxbourg, a major in the Bavarian army and Bavarian Minister in Paris in 1840. Her death occurred in that city on the 30th January 1868 at No. 20 Boulevard Malesherbes.

The Emperor and Empress had not long returned from Germany when the Hereditary Prince of Baden arrived in Paris. The Treaty of Presbourg, which had deprived him of his fiancée in favour of Eugène de Beauharnais, had likewise ordained that he was to wed a niece of the Empress, and the young Prince had meekly come to Paris to take delivery of the woman thus dictatorially assigned to him by Napoleon. Have not women from time immemorial been the spoils of war? His destined bride was none other than the youthful Stéphanie, daughter of Comte Claude de Beauharnais. The Comte de Beauharnais had married Mademoiselle de Lezai-Marnésia and Stéphanie was the offspring of the union. We are informed by the Memorial—which on this point is at variance with Madame de Rémusat's narrative, but which for once is probably the more correct—that when the Comte lost his wife his little daughter was entrusted to the care of an Englishwoman, a friend of her mother's, who, being rich and childless, had practically adopted her and put her to school at a convent somewhere in the South of France—Montauban according to the Emperor.

When he was First Consul, Napoleon once heard Josephine refer to the circumstance. "How," he exclaimed, "can you allow such a thing? How can you

suffer one who bears your name to be brought up at the expense of a foreigner, of an Englishwoman, that is to say an enemy of our country? Are you not afraid of what posterity will say about you?"[1] If this had been the only stain upon Josephine's memory no great harm would have been done, and one cannot but regard her husband's reflection as somewhat naïve. However, a messenger was despatched forthwith to bring back the child to the Tuileries. But the nuns refused to part with her. Napoleon was very much put out and, having armed himself with the necessary formal authority, sent a second messenger to the Prefect of the locality with orders to seize the girl Beauharnais in the name of the law and send her to Paris.

Little Stéphanie appears to have wept bitterly on her departure. They placed her with Madame Campan, where, amid the society of fresh companions, her tears soon ceased to flow. As her connexion with the Chief Consul was known, everyone was very attentive to her, mistresses and pupils alike. Before long she grew into a most attractive girl. "I have met few women," says the Duchesse d'Abrantès, "who struck me as being so charming as was Mademoiselle Stéphanie Beauharnais at this time. She possessed every advantage that a society woman could have wished for: a graceful bearing, good manners, a charming face and an excellent figure. In company she was sure of general popularity because she was pretty and had a gentle soothing way with her which won the hearts of the men; nor did the women bear her any ill-will, for she was kind and thoughtful for all."[2]

[1] *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, Vol. II, p. 341.

[2] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. V, p. 542.

But was her fiancé, prince though he was, worthy of such a little paragon? Not entirely, if we are to believe the same critic. "He was the most disagreeable being I ever saw, with a sulky look on his face like a child who has been put in the corner. Not in the least good-looking, he was, in a word, a highly undesirable prince and a still more undesirable fiancé."[1]

Such was clearly the opinion of the fair Stéphanie, whose satisfaction at marrying a prince was not a little modified at finding him so ugly. However, as the sauce makes the fish go down, so the brilliance of the match caused her to overlook the deficiencies of the bridegroom. As for the Prince, he seemed to accommodate himself quite readily to his new fiancée and conscientiously did his utmost to render himself pleasing in the eyes of the charming Princess whom it had fallen to his lot to wed and who was about to become his property. His property, yes; but Heavens! what he had to go through before he entered on possession!

He had quickly fallen in love with Stéphanie. Her fair tresses, rosy cheeks and blue eyes carried him away. The sound of her voice, sweeter to him than the sweetest music, went straight to his heart. Plain and heavy-featured as he was, common and ungainly as was his appearance, his heart was in the right place. He used to be reproached with being awkwardly conscious of his personal defects. Doubtless the pomp of the Imperial Court overcame him a little, but much less assuredly than the graces of his fair betrothed. It was also said to his discredit that he was always falling asleep wherever he happened to be.

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. VI, p. 26.

The charge was unkind, for it only shows that, the thoughts of Stéphanie having kept him awake at night, Nature insisted on resuming her sway in the daytime. Besides, whenever he indulged in his little naps, on a form perhaps or even on a stool, we may be sure that he merely wished to dream of his Stéphanie.

But the young Princess found this tendency to slumber distinctly annoying. Since the Emperor had adopted her she believed—and her vanity supported the notion—that she was a being of an altogether superior order to others of princely rank, and displayed a lofty aversion for her fiancé in consequence.

Napoleon found her gaiety, her flashes of wit and her animation highly entertaining. He saw well enough that her fiancé had no hold over the frivolous child and that her heart was still to be won. Instead, however, of giving her fatherly advice on the gravity of the step she was about to take, instead of talking to her about the seriousness of life or of recalling her to her duty, he amused himself by falling in love with her like any schoolboy. It was a mad thing to do, but there was no disguise about it. He was so severely smitten that he never thought of dissembling. In order to please her he began by formally adopting her: a somewhat singular proceeding, by the way, for a man to make a daughter of one whom he would have liked to make something very different. He seemed to overlook the fact that by adopting her he was undertaking the responsibilities of a parent and that these responsibilities would be in direct opposition to the ridiculous

and reprehensible ideas which had led him to adopt her.

The title of "adopted daughter of the Sovereign" was a new one, and it became necessary to examine the code of court etiquette and ceremonial to discover what privileges she was entitled to. The Emperor, as is the way with lovers, displayed a magnificent generosity. There was no haggling about honours with him. A decree was issued on the 3rd March 1806, whereby he assigned her a very exalted position at his Court. The following is the official wording of the document:—

> "Whereas it is our intention that the Princess Stéphanie Napoleon, our daughter, should enjoy all the prerogatives due to her rank, she shall at all receptions and public functions as well as at table be seated at our side, and in the event of our not being present her place shall be on the right hand of Her Majesty the Empress."

It was to this that the hero was brought by his unworthy passion, and details of this kind were deemed by him worthy of a special decree. It was a revival of the idlest occupations of his royal predecessors. The Press of the day, however, was muzzled by a strict censorship and no newspaper could air its views on such aberrations of genius. Even in the salons people were afraid to speak freely lest some secret agent of the police should be within earshot. Secure from comment, therefore, the Emperor followed his bent and acted as his fancy prompted him. He considered it his duty to make an announcement to the Senate concerning the

approaching marriage of the niece of Barras' first mistress. He did so in the following terms :—

"Senators, desirous of affording a proof of the affection which we entertain for the Princess Stéphanie de Beauharnais, the niece of our beloved Consort, we have affianced her to Charles Hereditary Prince of Baden, and we have further thought it fitting to adopt the said Princess Stéphanie Napoleon as our daughter. This union, which is the outcome of the friendly relations which have subsisted for several years past between ourselves and the Elector of Baden, is, we consider, in the interests of the political aims and well-being of both peoples. Our departments of the Rhine will witness with pleasure the cementing of an alliance which will afford them yet a further motive for cultivating and consolidating their commercial and social relations with the subjects of the Elector. The distinguished qualities of Prince Charles of Baden, as well as the signal friendship he has ever displayed towards us, are sure guarantees of our daughter's future happiness. Accustomed as we are to seeing you take an interest in all that concerns us, we have thought it incumbent upon us no longer to withhold from you the knowledge of an alliance which is the source of so much satisfaction to ourselves."

Such was the stuff that Napoleon served up for the stupid crowd, who with mouths agape are always ready to swallow with enthusiasm the pompous balderdash of official prose. Such also was the view he desired posterity to take of the matter. But history, thanks to the revelations of certain chroniclers, refuses to accept these fine phrases without verification. History beholds something concerning which the decrees are silent, to wit that the Emperor was in love with his adopted daughter, and, that being the case,

it examines with the most careful attention every phase of the strange comedy that was being enacted at the Tuileries. And what a comedy it was! There was the Emperor adopting his wife's niece because he was in love with her and trying to seduce her on the eve of her marriage; his wife growing jealous and doing her utmost to hurry on the wedding; finally, there was the girl, puffed up with conceit at finding herself a personage of such importance at the Court, half inclined to yield to her "father's" importunities, and slighting and pouting at her fiancé, the only one of them all who really loved her. Such was the edifying spectacle that was being unfolded before an attentive audience at the Tuileries.

As soon as the Senate had been informed of the intended marriage, the Emperor gave orders that apartments were to be got ready for the young Princess at the Tuileries. Thither she came and took up her quarters in a private suite that had been specially furnished for her. There she began her royal apprenticeship, receiving deputations from the great Departments of State, among others from the Senate. The latter, either from malice or a desire to flatter, had included her father, Monsieur de Beauharnais, among the delegates entrusted with the mission of offering her their congratulations. It was not a little interesting to see her father, who in the past had been so totally oblivious of his parental duties, coming to compliment her officially on the exalted alliance she was about to contract.

People soon become accustomed to greatness, and Stéphanie received the compliments paid her with an

ease and grace of manner which delighted them all, while the words of acknowledgment which she addressed to each in return won her the affection of everyone.

Her presence at the Tuileries raised problems of etiquette regarding her status which called for solution. The Emperor, however, settled the matter by ordering that she should take precedence of everyone but the Empress. One can imagine what flutterings there were in the dovecots when this was announced, for she thus had the *pas* over all the Bonapartes, over the Emperor's mother as well as over his brothers and sisters. And why, pray? Just because the Great Man wished it; because he was in love, and because, as is the case with all men attacked by love-sickness, the world melted into nothingness beside the woman he adored. But what a glaring contradiction such conduct displayed to those fine "principles" of which he made such a boast when he told Madame de Rémusat that love was not for him, but that if ever he did fall seriously in love he would dissect his passion piecemeal. The moment had arrived, one would have thought, to put this analytical system into practice. If he had been really true to himself he ought to have had grit enough to do so. But his vanity was too highly flattered at seeing a young woman so ready to enter upon a flirtation with him to admit of his entertaining any thoughts calculated to prevent him bringing about a *dénouement* which seemed to him to be as certain as it was imminent. This romantic episode is an example of how genius itself may be led astray when Honour is not at the helm, Honour, that

is to say, which neither interest nor opportunity can corrupt.

For her part, the little scatter-brained Stéphanie pretended to share the Emperor's ardour. She was still over-young and over-frivolous, nor had her education been of the kind which gives the healthy mind a constant mastery over itself and the power to perceive at a glance the path of duty amid the innumerable byways which intersect it in all directions as though to impart a loftier merit to those who disdain their seeming delights. It was therefore hardly to be expected that all this succession of honours, exciting events and appeals to her emotions should not have turned her head. She scorned her fiancé because she imagined herself in love with the Emperor, and the following lines of La Rochefoucauld seem to have been written expressly for her: "Women often fancy themselves in love when they are not; the amusement of an intrigue, the mental excitement produced by gallantry, their natural delight at being loved and their unwillingness to give pain by a refusal, all combine to make them fancy they are in love when, in fact, they are only coquetting." Coquetting! That was precisely the case with Stéphanie—the whole matter in a single word.

Meanwhile the liveliest discontent, anger, rage even, prevailed among the members of the Imperial Family. Madame Mère compressed her thin lips and only delivered herself of a few highly pithy Corsican phrases; her other sons said nothing before the Emperor, but indulged in a prodigious flow of eloquence when they were alone; and as for her daughters, their fury knew

no bounds. After all, they were not without excuse. Princess Caroline, in whom pride, jealousy and detestation of the Beauharnais reached their climax, could not contain herself and made no effort to restrain the torrent of her indignation. Stéphanie laughed at her just as she laughed at everything else, and she made the Emperor, who was determined to be amused at everything she said, join in the laugh as well. It was an intolerable situation for the Bonapartes, and as for Josephine, she did not know, in her jealousy, whom to be angry with, her husband or her niece. She therefore fell out with both of them and this time she was not at fault. There were scenes with the Emperor and remonstrances with Stéphanie which they both richly deserved. The Emperor admitted that he had, in fact, a liking for the little *pensionnaire* whom they were going to get married, but that she need not worry about that, adding that the Prince of Baden was the only person who had a right to complain, but that he should take it very ill if that wide-chapped individual should even seem to perceive what was perfectly patent to all.

However, seeing that he would be making himself the laughing-stock of France and Europe unless he dissembled his passion, he became more cautious, while, on her side, Stéphanie listened meekly enough to her aunt's advice. Won over by the maternal manner which the Empress assumed, she confessed everything and "told her all about the occasional freedom with which her 'father' conducted himself towards her."[1] When, at length, as the result of her

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 356.

aunt's admonitions, she fully realised her position, she concluded her confession by stating that she had only wished to amuse herself. Amusement had also been the Emperor's object, and he had acquired a taste for the game. But Stéphanie, who had become more serious since her aunt's exhortations, was less inclined to play into Napoleon's hands and displayed a firmness that her previous light behaviour would have led no one to anticipate. But this change of attitude towards the Emperor brought with it no improvement in her relations with her unlucky fiancé. He, who thought that time would bring about the fulfilment of his hopes, had one paramount desire, which was promptly to marry the frivolous little Stéphanie and, more promptly still, to remove her from such a pernicious atmosphere. At last, to his infinite satisfaction, the day of the solemn betrothal arrived. The ceremony took place in the evening of the 7th April in the Gallery of Diana, and they were married the day after in the chapel of the Tuileries. The youthful bride was resplendent in a robe of white silk with silver embroidery and rose trimmings. On her head she wore a band of diamonds surmounted by orange blossom, while a white mantle spangled with silver stars was bravely flung over her shoulders. She walked to the altar with all the grace in the world and deservedly won the admiration of the whole Court, who never ceased to gaze at her unless it was to glance at the Emperor in order to see what sort of an expression he was wearing. To please him, all had appeared in their most magnificent attire. It was known that he had presented the bride with the most costly gifts and that he

had given her a superb diamond necklace as well as a quantity of other jewels in exquisite taste. It was also known that he had given her a dowry of fifteen hundred thousand francs and there were many whisperings as to the reasons for such a display of generosity. However, the members of the Court vied with one another in the lavishness of their display. Madame de Rémusat no less than the rest seems to have been anxious to win her Sovereign's favour by sparing no expense. She had ordered a gown of pink crêpe spangled from head to foot with silver and trimmed with a wreath of jessamine. It had cost sixty louis, a very high price for those days. In her hair sprays of the same flower twined their tendrils around clusters of diamonds. All the other ladies of the palace rivalled one another in the gorgeousness of their dress and jewels. Amid this brilliant throng was to be seen the youthful bride's father, whose feelings must have been many and varied, yet he managed to give expression to them all by shedding a few appropriate tears.

The Emperor was not the sort of man to attempt to conceal his feelings when once he perceived that he had allowed them to become apparent. On the conclusion of the ceremony he gave his arm to the bride, and all the company withdrew to the Grand Apartments. Attired in his robes of state, which he wore with an air of such majesty that it seemed to have its effect even on himself, he held his great reception. There was a concert, a ballet and finally a supper. The occasion gave rise to renewed discontent in the Imperial Family when it was seen with disgust that the new Princess of Baden took precedence of Madame

Mère and seated herself on the right hand of the Emperor.

At last the entertainment came to an end. The Emperor, for some mysterious reason, went to pass the night at Saint-Cloud and the bride retired to her own rooms. Though she had been persuaded to reject the attentions of Napoleon, she could not make up her mind, now that she was married, to receive those of her husband. She obstinately refused to allow him to enter her room. The unhappy Prince was painfully distressed at this decision, which kept him lingering at the portals of bliss. Since, however, he could not succeed in banishing the obstinacy of his charming bride, he made the best of a bad business and slept on a sofa. "To-morrow," said he to himself, "Stéphanie will surely not be so cruel. Women are such funny creatures!" Alas, his hopes were vain. The morrow came and still the door remained closed against the luckless bridegroom. He no longer found her "funny." There was nothing for it but to mount guard before the door of the room, and the next night and the next and for several nights after it was the same. Time did not soften her.

Then the Court removed to Saint-Cloud and the young couple went with it. Prince Charles lived in hopes that the change of residence would bring about a change of feeling in the bosom of the strange girl he had married, and he did not lose patience. But the redoubtable Stéphanie remained obdurate and would not allow him near her. The poor youth, who was thus compelled to spend his nights on a form in the antechamber, did his utmost by argument, by coaxing,

and by every appeal to eloquence and pity of which he was capable, to soften the heart of this unbending Vestal, but all to no purpose. Stéphanie since her marriage seemed to have taken a vow of chastity and to be bent on keeping it.

Worn out at length by sleepless nights and fruitless entreaties, the Prince began to find the roses fading from his cheeks, and during the daytime he was observed dozing about the place wherever and whenever he could, just as he had done in his pre-matrimonial days. As a matter of fact he had not advanced an inch in Stéphanie's affections since the day of the betrothal. If he had behaved towards her as General Bonaparte had behaved towards Madame Fourès in Egypt, he might have put a different complexion on the business. There are some women whose hearts can only be won by brute force.

At court there are no secrets, and everyone revels in incidents of this kind. As one may readily guess, little else was talked about but Prince Charles and his perplexing rôle of husband *in partibus*. The Prince had complained to the Empress of the harsh manner in which her niece was treating him, and he begged her to read her a lesson and to try to bring her into a more reasonable frame of mind. Josephine did as he requested, but as she dearly loved a gossip, particularly about matters such as this, her entourage and the whole Court became acquainted with every development in this extraordinary honeymoon.

The Emperor was equally as well informed as the rest, and he flattered himself that Stéphanie's only reason for withholding her favours from her husband was that

she wished to reserve them for *him*. So he began once more to make much of his adopted daughter, and his hopes began to revive. As, however, they remained unrealised, he at last perceived how ridiculous he was making himself again and what discredit his conduct was bringing on the Court and on himself. With the same promptitude, therefore, with which he sometimes reversed all his prearranged tactics on the battlefield itself, he determined that the Prince of Baden should go to Carlsruhe and that his wife should go with him. Josephine was not slow to second the decision. Jealous as ever, and knowing how little her husband was to be depended on, she told him again and again that it was high time the young couple went to their own home. She gave him no rest about the matter. As for the Prince, he was always moody and taciturn. Political matters too began to engross the Emperor's attention. One fine day, being sick of the ludicrous rôle he had been playing, he said to himself that the devil might run away with the little coquette, who appeared to take him no more seriously than she took her husband, and he decided to send the pair of them packing.

Such was the conclusion of this strange flirtation, in which the Emperor only succeeded in covering himself with ridicule. Princess Stéphanie wept copiously when the time came for her to say farewell to France. She obtained but poor consolation in Baden, for her father-in-law, who knew of her behaviour, gave her a rather cool reception. Her husband, after so many rebuffs, at last let her be, but that did not procure her happiness. In short, things were going pretty badly in that domestic circle when Napoleon, whose conscience

pricked him more than a little for the unsatisfactory manner in which the marriage had turned out, thought it time to impress on Stéphanie how stupid and how odious her conduct was. He despatched certain secret agents to Baden to point out to her how immeasurably important it was for her to bear children to her husband, and to remind her that she had duties to fulfil, not only towards the people of Baden, but to her husband also, and that it was an absolute necessity that she should bear an heir to the crown without delay. The foolish girl had never thought of that side of the question, but now she perceived the error of her ways and wished to make amends. Her attitude towards her husband underwent a total change; she became kind and gracious, and did her utmost to attract him. But Prince Charles had been deeply offended—not without cause it must be allowed—at her past treatment of him and rejected the advances she made him now that it suited her interests and her whim to smile on him. Nor was it till long afterwards that his very justifiable indignation gave way before his wife's unfailing amiability of temper. She even succeeded in gaining his affection and thenceforth their married life, which had begun so unhappily, went on sensibly enough. Why could it not have begun so?[1]

[1] Méneval, with his customary bias in favour of everything concerning the Emperor, ascribes the preliminary lack of harmony to the anti-French prejudices of the Grand Duke's Court. We have seen that such was not the real reason.

CHAPTER VIII

The Emperor at Berlin—An adventure with a young German woman—A silent interview—Misfortunes of "la petite Berlinoise"—The Queen of Prussia and Napoleon's harshness—The Emperor in Poland; his letters to Josephine—Madame Walewska; Napoleon falls in love with her and writes to her—Her long-deferred surrender—The first meeting—Continuous intercourse—Madame Walewska joins the Emperor at the Château de Finkenstein and stays with him three weeks—Reciprocal affection—The Emperor returns to Paris—Madame Gazzani once more; she receives a special mark of favour—The Emperor and his Court at Fontainebleau—Madame B—— receives the Emperor in her room at night—Madame Savary.

DISAPPOINTED in his guilty designs upon his adopted daughter, Napoleon found consolation in the bosom of the complaisant Madame Gazzani. Soon, however, the cares of State absorbed all his attention, and the war with Prussia intervened to tear him from his capital.

But war did not sever him from the *distractions* which had become a sort of second nature with him in Paris. True it is that now it was not he who sought them out but they which came to him of their own accord, as though he had never quitted the Tuileries.

It is well known that the French officers made many conquests among the Prussian beauties. "They are gay and sparkling," says an officer who served in the campaign of 1806, and committed to paper a daily record of his impressions. "At Berlin particularly

they are petite, graceful, with most voluptuous figures, and faces as refined as they are seductive. If reliance is to be placed on what I have been told by certain officers of my acquaintance who have been in the city for some months past, these ladies appraise their charms too highly to deem it necessary to enhance the value of them by any very strenuous resistance."[1]

This high opinion of her attractions was evidently entertained by the young woman with whom we are now about to deal, for, from the outset, her ambitions aspired to the Emperor himself. She was not content, like her fair fellow-citizens, with winning the favour of mere officers, nor, any more than they, did she seek to put a premium on her charms by delaying her surrender. It happened, then, one morning when the Emperor was holding a Grand Review at Berlin, that a young girl, accompanied by an elderly female, approached the officers who were in attendance on him and begged to be allowed to present a petition. On being brought before the Emperor she held out a paper which he put in his pocket promising to examine it that very day. The two women thereupon withdrew. On returning to the Charlottenburg Palace, where he had established his head-quarters, the Emperor read the petition and handed it to Constant, saying, "Constant, read this request. On it you will see the address of the women who presented it. Go to them and find out what it is they want." Constant read the letter, which merely contained a prayer for the favour of a private interview with the Emperor.

[1] Général Fautin des Odoards, *Journal*, p. iii.

In obedience to his master's orders, Constant went to the address indicated, where he saw the two ladies of the morning. One was a young girl of surpassing beauty who could not have been more than fifteen or sixteen years of age; the other was apparently her mother. The latter only knew a word or two of French and the former not a single one. Constant asked her if she knew Italian, but she had no better acquaintance with that language. At length it dawned on him—the extreme beauty of the young Berlinoise gave him the cue—what the nature of the desired interview was intended to be. He also succeeded in gathering from the mother's laboured utterances that she was a Prussian officer's widow, and aspired to the honour of being presented to the Emperor at the same time as her daughter. Constant pointed out that the petition only begged an audience for her daughter, and that, in his opinion, it would be necessary for her to go unaccompanied. Such were the exigencies of Court etiquette. The mother accepted the situation and did not press the matter. Constant then took his leave, and went to recount the interview to his master.

The Emperor saw at once what was in the wind. It was not the first time he had received such a request, and though as a measure of precaution he usually passed them on to the police—for he was by no means anxious to re-enact the part of Holofernes to some modern fanatical Judith—he made an exception in favour of the youthful petitioner over whose beauty Constant had gone into raptures, and commanded his *valet de chambre* to conduct her to him that very evening.

At ten o'clock, therefore, Constant ordered a carriage and went to fetch her. The mother absolutely insisted on accompanying her daughter. The look of the thing—the moral aspect of it . . . and then there were such a number of scandal-mongers in Berlin that if her daughter were seen going out at night in a carriage alone with a gentleman they might begin to talk. Her daughter had no dowry but her honour, and as a good mother it was her duty to see that it was not imperilled. So she too came to the palace. Constant put her into a room and made her sit down while he conducted her daughter to the Emperor.

What could have occupied them seeing that Napoleon knew no German and the girl no French or Italian? Evidently there was nothing metaphysical about the discussion as there had been in the case of Madame de Rémusat; that which engaged their attention was much more probably merely physical in character. But one thing is certain—they arrived at a complete understanding, for the night was drawing to a close and still they had not brought their meeting to an end. When morning came the Emperor rang his bell. Constant, who had also passed a sleepless night, which the presence of the ancient dame had scarcely contributed to enliven, hastened to obey the summons. Napoleon ordered him to bring four thousand francs which he himself put into the girl's hands. The latter appeared enchanted at the sight of so much money and went back to her mother who, highly delighted at having accompanied her daughter to the palace and thereby safeguarded appearances, once more entered the carriage

with her, and Constant saw them back to their door. The Emperor, who was never over-reticent about his love-affairs, did not fail—since the Empress was not at hand to listen to the story—to give Constant a full account of his impressions. The little Prussian was decidedly to his taste, but the drawback was that neither had been able to say a word to the other. Nevertheless he seems to have derived considerable satisfaction from their silent interview. This advantage it certainly possessed over ordinary meetings of the kind—they could not give utterance to the follies usual on such occasions; they were limited to enacting them.

In case the reader should be curious to learn what subsequently befell the little Berlinoise who succeeded in rendering her silent *tête-à-tête* with Napoleon so interesting, Constant informs us that she was abducted by a French officer. Apparently he did understand German since he was able to declare his affection, and the young woman, who seems to have conceived a liking for private interviews with Frenchmen, had no scruples about accompanying him.

The Treaty of Tilsit had been signed and the war with Germany and Russia was over. Constant, who had returned with the Emperor, had only been in Paris a few days when, walking one day along the Rue de Richelieu, he was accosted by a rather shabbily dressed woman wearing her hat well down over her eyes in order to conceal her features. As she raised her head to speak to him he recognised the pretty Berlinoise. She could now speak French fairly well, her slightly foreign accent imparting an added charm

to what she said. She related all that had happened to her since she quitted Berlin, and a pretty story it was. She had been foolish enough to yield to the importunities of a French colonel who had sworn to love her everlastingly. It was the colonel's hope—so at least she inferred from his subsequent conduct—that the Emperor would further his interests if he married her. The Emperor did not lend himself to any such discreditable piece of business, and its author, who seems to have had only the vaguest conception of honour, abandoned to her fate in a house of ill-repute the woman whom he had thought of making his wife. Since then the unhappy creature had been struggling in a condition of hopeless misery, and now her only desire was to return to Berlin, but unfortunately she lacked the wherewithal to defray the expenses of the journey.

Constant's interest was awakened by the sad story of this victim of human corruption, and the same night as he was undressing the Emperor he told him of the encounter of the morning.

"The Emperor," he tells us, "was much pleased to learn that his pretty little foreign friend could speak French fairly well and evinced some desire to see her again. However, I ventured to point out that there was reason to apprehend that she was now scarcely worthy of his attentions, and I proceeded to relate the wanderings and adventures of the poor forsaken creature. My story had the desired effect; it chilled his ardour and excited his pity."[1]

The Emperor was really much moved at the story of

[1] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 70.

the sufferings of the woman whose entrancing beauty he had so appreciated. He commanded Constant to count her out, as he had done at Berlin, the sum of four thousand francs and to prevail upon her to return at once to her own country. This, doubtless, was what she did, for Constant having performed his mission and received from the unfortunate woman the most glowing expressions of the gratitude with which the Emperor's generosity inspired her, she was heard of no more.

There is no record of any other gallantry on the part of the Emperor during his sojourn in Prussia. The beautiful and gracious Queen, whose misfortunes only served to heighten the effect of her personal attractions, endeavoured to soften his heart and to win from him less harsh conditions for her country. But Napoleon was inexorable, and, though treating the Queen with the utmost courtesy, did not allow himself to be moved by the charm which a beautiful woman in misfortune never fails to exercise over the hearts of men. He wrote to the Empress from Tilsit on the 8th July, 1807:—

> "The Queen of Prussia has been positively charming. She does her utmost to attract me, but there is no need for you to be jealous. It all runs off me like water off a duck's back. It would cost me too dear to play the gallant."

Without playing the gallant with a Queen of such lofty virtue, or thinking of an intrigue in which he knew he would never have the slightest chance of success, Napoleon did endeavour at a later date to make amends,

by certain gracious acts, for the harshness which he had displayed towards her in his bulletins. But the Emperor's firmness in the incident above referred to is open to an explanation which perhaps detracts somewhat from its merit. He was in love, and more deeply in love than he had ever been before, save perhaps in the case of Josephine in 1796.

It will be recollected that after the defeat of the Prussian forces the French troops advanced against the Russians, and that the war was carried into Poland. Napoleon had established his head-quarters at Warsaw where he spent the whole of January 1807. He took up his abode in the Palace and surrounded himself with every luxury that the resources of the country permitted. There he received the leading lights of the Polish nobility, who were longing for the restoration of the ancient kingdom of Poland and had put all their hopes in Napoleon. Without committing himself to any definite promises, Napoleon made enquiries of each of them regarding the men, horses and supplies which the country could furnish, fostering their illusions and their hopes by sympathetic speeches. At Warsaw he thus became the object of boundless enthusiasm. Splendid fêtes and balls to which people flocked from places fifty leagues away were given in his honour. To Josephine, who was always afraid that his fickleness would lead him into some new manifestation of unfaithfulness, he wrote: "You are quite wrong. Nothing could be further from my thoughts. Here in these Polish deserts one does not dream much of the fair sex. I was yesterday at a ball given by the nobility of the province. The women were beautiful

enough and well enough dressed, but in the Parisian fashion."[1]

We can scarcely believe that Napoleon thought so little about the ladies as he pretended in his letter to Josephine. In his anxiety to set her mind at rest he talks to her about the Polish deserts—he forgets that he speaks to her of balls being given in those deserts. Josephine, of course, knew well enough that there are no balls without women, and that the Polish ladies were deservedly famous for their good looks. Whether it was, as Madame de Rémusat tells us, that Josephine had "a tender spot in her heart for one of the Emperor's equerries who was then absent with his master,"[2] and wished to rejoin her husband in order to see his equerry, or whether her jealousy was excited by a presentiment of the Emperor's coming infidelities, she insisted with all the energy at her command on going to keep him company. Napoleon, though loudly protesting that life was not worth living away from his wife, declared that he could not dream of allowing her to undertake such an interminable journey. "All these Polish women are French," he wrote to her, "but there is only one woman for me. Do you know who she is? I should like to describe her to you, but I should have to flatter her too much for you to recognise yourself. . . . How long the nights seem when one is all alone!"[3]

[1] *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine*, Vol. I, pièce LXXIII, 3rd December, 1806.

[2] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p 118.

[3] *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine*, Vol. I, pièce LXXII, Posen, 2nd December, 1806.

They soon proved by no means so long, though, it must be allowed, he was then no longer alone.

As soon as Napoleon had taken up his quarters in Warsaw the Polish nobility began to give balls in his honour. Ever since he had left Berlin Napoleon's conduct had been irreproachable as far as the ladies were concerned, and the sight of the lovely Polish women, whose charms were heightened by the sheen of the lustres which shed their radiance on the brilliant scene, did not fail to make appeal to his senses. At one of these gatherings Napoleon's attention was attracted by a fair-haired, blue-eyed young woman, whose beautifully delicate complexion and modest and retiring bearing formed a somewhat striking contrast with the rather over-confident manner of the others. He made enquiries, and was informed that she was Madame Walewska, the wife of an old Polish count, a man whose sombre disposition and rigid habits were certainly but little calculated to bring joy into the life of his youthful wife. It was not that he did not love her, but what could there possibly be in common between a grave old gentleman such as he and the spontaneous gaiety of a young woman who only numbered twenty-two summers?

The Emperor's interest was not a little excited by the information they gave him concerning her. And what in truth could be better calculated to awaken the spirit of romance in a man than the spectacle of a young and beautiful woman condemned from monetary considerations to live a life of wedded misery with an aged husband? The idea that a woman's happiness has been sacrificed, that she is a sufferer,

lends a halo to her beauty and evokes the desire to console her for the bitterness of her lot. "The Emperor was greatly taken with her and felt himself attracted at first sight."[1] Moreover, from what he was told, "he looked upon her as a woman whose happiness had been sacrificed, and this idea largely augmented the interest with which she inspired him from the first."[2]

Napoleon approached Madame Walewska and addressed her in kindly tones, and then there ensued a conversation in which she made the most of an intellectual charm that had been heightened and perfected by an excellent education. The faultless melody of her voice added infinitely to her attractiveness, nor was her influence lessened by the assumption of a little refined coquetry and a slight air of melancholy behind which, as behind a veil, she sparkled, blue-eyed, radiant and elusive. What made her a still more interesting study was that she half revealed—but in a manner so subtle as only to be appreciated by those whose refinement of feeling enabled them to perceive the most delicate shades of meaning—that she had not found happiness in marriage. The Emperor, whose state of mind led him to regard everything about her with enthusiasm, grew warmly interested in her lot. How was it possible, he asked himself, that a woman of such gracious refinement, such incomparable charm, the possessor of a form so exquisitely moulded as to make one long to kiss the ground beneath her feet—how was it possible that she, so young and so lovely, should have been

[1] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 340.
[2] Duc de Rovigo, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 27.

offered as a sacrifice to a feeble-minded dotard? Surely the Fates had never brought about a more stupid union than this. Was it then not his duty to repair the wrong the Fates had wrought her, so far as in him lay, by showering upon their unhappy victim those consolations and favours which she merited more than any other woman? Clearly it was but justice.

Love is a subtle casuist, and when a man is debating how to act in a matter where love and a woman are concerned, sophistry usually dictates his decision and he is led captive by his feelings or his desires.

If in this instance Napoleon had carried out his much-vaunted system of "dissecting his passion bit by bit" and so divested his conception of this young Polish dame of all that glamour of romance with which his imagination had clothed her, he would have seen that there was nothing so very ethereal about the matter after all. She was a pretty woman, he had conceived a passion for her, and seeing he was Emperor she was bound to give way. That was the whole story.

Nevertheless he was decidedly more deeply smitten with her than he had ever been with other women, and the ardour he displayed in his conversation left the young woman in no doubt as to the completeness of her conquest of the great Conqueror. This, if it set Madame Walewska a-dreaming, prevented Napoleon from sleeping. "The day after the ball," says Constant, "the Emperor struck me as being unusually restless. He kept getting up, walking about, sitting down and getting up again. I thought I should never succeed in getting him dressed."[1] Finally Napoleon

[1] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 341.

could contain himself no longer. Accustomed to seeing the court ladies and *lectrices* give in without a murmur he imagined he was going to treat the fair Polish dame just like one of the latter. However, he did not open the negotiations with her himself. He put the matter into the hands of a *grand personnage*, Constant informs us, the "grand personnage" in question being undoubtedly Duroc, who, although he had just broken his collar-bone in a carriage accident, was sent to visit Madame Walewska to present her the Emperor's compliments and to inform her with all due discretion of the hopes he had ventured to conceive.

Duroc played the part of *avant-courier* in his master's love affairs, and no one was better qualified than he to bring such negotiations to a successful conclusion. His graceful manners, the charm of his address and his general air of distinction were bound, the Emperor thought, to ensure success. As for Duroc, he did not stick at the consideration that Napoleon's request was hardly of a sort to which a man of his character ought to accede. He may have thought too that the friendship the Emperor displayed towards him almost made it his duty to pocket his dignity. At any rate he carried out his mission to the letter. To his utter amazement Madame Walewska disdainfully refused the Emperor's proposals. This is often the way of coquettes. They will do their utmost to provoke a declaration of love and as soon as it is made wrap themselves up in a garment of offended dignity. They are anxious to avoid the appearance of too ready a surrender, and though they may be dying to yield, they endeavour to find occasions for delay, their sole

object being to enhance the importance in men's eyes of the vulgar favours they invariably end by granting them. Thus Madame Walewska played the coquette. She had quite possibly made up her mind after her conversation with the Emperor at the ball to hearken to his proposals. She was dazzled by his radiant glory, his immense power, and had visions of sharing his happiness. Nor was Napoleon the man less to her taste than Napoleon the hero, and if he had been thrilled by the delicious tones of her voice she had been by no means insensible to the charm of his. The homage which he had paid her had found its way to her heart and put her beside herself with vanity, and vanity is always a potent factor in prompting the dictates of a woman's heart.

But she was unwilling to capitulate at the first assault. Though she had determined to surrender she had made up her mind not to fall without the honours of war. So, to begin with, she had sent General Duroc to the right-about without giving him the slightest word of encouragement for his master.

The Emperor was keenly annoyed at the rebuff which implied that there were still some women who were prepared to ignore his power and evade his domination. The ladies of Poland, however, were not generally credited with a reputation for hard-heartedness; his officers, he knew, were never weary of eulogising their charms, and it seemed a little too much that he, the Emperor, should enjoy less favour than his staff. His pride was hurt at the idea, and not being able to abandon the hopes on the fulfilment of which he had set his heart, hopes which opposition only made

more keen, he remained worried and ill at ease the whole day long. He spoke to no one, and the general impression was that affairs of State of the gravest import were engrossing the attention of the arbiter of Europe's destiny. Europe, forsooth! Europe was occupying him mightily just then!

At length he made up his mind to write to her. But no reply came. He wrote again and again, and stung to the quick he resolved to gain his end whatever happened. Every fruitless effort on his part only gave a keener edge to his desires and at last he put all his heart and soul into his letters.

The fair coquette now deemed that the moment for surrender had arrived. No one could deny that she had offered a praiseworthy resistance. There were not many women, especially in a country where gallantry was regarded as almost permissible, who would have been capable of holding out so long against such alluring temptations. She therefore agreed to come to the Emperor's palace one night between ten and eleven. Napoleon was in the seventh heaven. He ordered Duroc to go and wait for Madame Walewska at the place she had named and, like a young man who does not know how to kill time during the hours which lie between him and his first lover's meeting, "he kept striding up and down in a most impatient and excited manner, and continually asked what time it was. Madame Walewska came at last, but what a state she was in. Pale, speechless, her eyes streaming with tears."[1]

In describing the details of the meeting it is prefer-

[1] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 343.

able to follow Constant's narrative, for he was an eye-witness of the scene, rather than to accept Madame de Rémusat's hearsay account[1] which was doubtless the version current at the Tuileries.

As soon as she arrived Constant conducted her to the Emperor's room. She could scarcely walk and had to

[1] Her narrative is as follows:—

"On the occasion of the first occupation of Poland, Murat had preceded his Sovereign to Warsaw to seek out a young and pretty woman from among the nobility, if possible, in view of the Emperor's shortly expected arrival. He tactfully performed his mission, and succeeded in winning over by skilful persuasion the young and aristocratic wife of an aged Polish nobleman. What means he employed or what promises he made we cannot say. At any rate, she gave her unqualified consent, and even agreed one evening to go to the neighbouring Castle of Warsaw, where the Emperor had fixed his quarters.

"She was accordingly despatched and reached her destination, but at rather a late hour. She herself has told the story of her adventure, and confessed that she was trembling all over and felt very distressed, which we may well believe. The Emperor was shut up in his study when the new-comer was announced. Without putting himself about in the least he commanded that she should be conducted to her room and that they should offer her a bath and some supper, adding that she might afterwards go to bed if she felt inclined. He himself, however, went on working till rather a late hour.

"His task at length completed he proceeded to the room where he had been for a long time expected. He went in with all the brusqueness of a man too conscious of his authority to trouble himself about any preliminary ceremony, and without a moment's interval started the most singular conversation about the political situation in Poland, cross-questioning her as though she had been a police officer and asking for the most detailed information respecting the members of the Polish nobility then at Warsaw. He made minute enquiries regarding their opinions and political sympathies, and it was a long time before he concluded this extraordinary cross-examination.

"One can easily imagine the astonishment this girl of twenty must have felt at a prologue so totally at variance with her expectations. She did her best to answer all his enquiries, and when her fount of information had run dry and he could get no further details from her, then and then only did he appear to recollect that Murat had promised in his name some words of a tenderer nature" (Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 122.)

lean on his arm. At length the *valet de chambre* got her inside, whereupon he and the Grand Marshal withdrew. We conclude, however, that he did not go far, as he tells us that "all through her interview with the Emperor, in spite of the intervening distance, the sound of her sobbing was enough to break one's heart."

We may take it for granted that at this first meeting Madame Walewska made it clear to Napoleon with copious tears that she was a virtuous but unhappy woman with a crabbed, jealous, unbearable old man for a husband, and that if she gave way to him at last it was because she had confidence in his greatness of heart and knew that he would not take advantage of her weakness and inexperience; she told him, in a word, just the sort of things by which women know so well how to win over the lover in whose arms they have made up their mind to seek solace for a wounded heart or some brilliant and tangible compensation for the mediocrity of their fortunes. It is further probable—and Constant supports the idea—that at this first interview the Emperor obtained nothing from her but tears.

At length, about two o'clock in the morning, Napoleon rang his bell. His valet, who never went to bed when it was the Great Man's pleasure to stay up, hastened to open the door, and Madame Walewska passed out before him. She seemed just as agitated as when she arrived and, holding her handkerchief to her eyes, was still weeping bitterly. Duroc offered her his arm and putting her into her carriage accompanied her home.

After an interview at which she had done nothing but weep one would scarcely have expected her to come

again. But come she did—doubtless to seek consolation for all her tears—and this time "she seemed more at her ease. Her charming countenance still gave evidence of deep emotion but her eyes were tearless and less sad-looking. She went early, but continued her visits up to the time of the Emperor's departure."[1]

Had she been displeased with the Emperor, Madame Walewska, when once she had paid a tribute of tears appropriate to the position in which she had placed herself, would not have come back again. As for the Emperor, he was up in the skies. This time he told his wife nothing about the mistress he had found. He did not entertain her with the details of his good fortune as he had been in the habit of doing hitherto, and his letters were more affectionate than ever. He would not hear of Josephine coming to interfere with his arrangements at Warsaw. "We must bow to circumstances," he wrote her, "there are too many countries to traverse between Mayence and Warsaw. . . . I rather think you would do well to go back to Paris."[2] Again, possibly on the very day that witnessed Madame Walewska's surrender, he wrote with a little half-suppressed Satanic smile: "I am more put out than you are—I should have loved to have you with me these long winter nights."[3] A little later he adopts the humorous vein. "Go home to Paris and be gay and happy there. Very likely I shall be there too before long. I laughed at your saying you had taken a husband in order to live with him; I thought that the

[1] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. II.

[2] *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine*, Vol. I, pièce LXXXII, Warsaw, 3rd January, 1807.

[3] *Ibid.*, pièce LXXXIV, Warsaw, 8th January, 1807.

wife was made for her husband and the husband for his country, his family, and for glory. Pardon my ignorance. Our fair dames are always teaching us something."

Is it the "fair dames" who teach us how to lie? Is it from them that we learn how to banter like a young Talleyrand and to say for example, "Be assured what pain it costs me not to bid you come; say to yourself, 'It is but a proof how precious I am to him'"? If he showed this letter to the young Polish woman before sending it to the withered Creole, how she must have laughed. A mistress always takes a subtle delight in joining with the husband in a joke at his wife's expense, and it would seem that Napoleon afforded this unhallowed pleasure to his latest conquest.

The Emperor was obliged to leave Warsaw to go to meet the Russian forces. He fought the bloody but indecisive battle of Eylau, of which he himself has left behind a most harrowing description. Nevertheless, in spite of the thought of so many thousands lying dead or dying in the snow, his heart was with his beautiful paramour. The desire to have her with him once more outweighed all his regrets for the horrible slaughter at Eylau. Sensualism for the time being had gained the ascendency over sentiment. He was haunted by the recollection of those feverish pleasures to whose intoxicating influence he but too often abandoned himself; he called for them then and there—he insisted on them with the very madness of passion.[1]

[1] The above is not the sole incident of the kind. The following story was told me by the Baron H. Larrey who had it on the authority of his father, the distinguished surgeon of the Grand Army, who used to

He therefore despatched a letter to Madame Walewska bidding her come, but it is possible he did not wait till her arrival.

The Russian army had begun to retreat, and the hardships of winter had put an end for a time to the horrors of war. Napoleon established his head-quarters at Finkenstein in a mansion of considerable dimensions, and it was there that Madame Walewska joined him. A suite of rooms communicating with the Emperor's had been prepared for her.

Whether the aged Comte Walewski learned of his wife's adultery before or after her departure for Finkenstein it is hard to say, but what is beyond question is that he showed more strength of character than Bonaparte had displayed in similar circumstances. The latter had become reconciled to Josephine, but Comte Walewski refused to have anything more to do with the woman who had played fast and loose with her honour and her marriage vows. Nor does Madame Walewska appear to have been anxious to renew relations with the man whom she had wronged. Her husband was old, and in the natural course of things it could not be many years ere she became a widow. She

recount it with disgust. After a certain battle, I don't know which, he had seen Napoleon return to his quarters with eyes aflame, calling out "A woman! A woman! Bring me a woman at once!" A fine time to choose for such a distraction when thousands of unhappy men were breathing their last for his sake. Some of his officers followed his example and availed themselves of women before a battle like absinthe before dinner. If Lannes—a married man, by the way—had not passed the night preceding Essling in the arms of a Viennese he might have had strength enough to recover from his terrible wounds. The celebrated Lassalle himself distributed women among his officers, and General Fournier, one of the worst characters in the army it must be confessed, always included an assortment of them among his impedimenta.

had only to wait till then to be free to employ her liberty as she chose. In the meantime she was for availing herself to the utmost of her unauthorised freedom for the indulgence of her pleasures and the advancement of her fortunes. It was, of course, a matter for herself and her conscience. But her conscience had grown dim since she had first set eyes on the brilliant genius whose glory she had found so dazzling, and in her, as in every woman who compromises her honour, conscience had given place to self-deceit. As time went on the falseness of her position ceased to jar upon her. Gradually she put aside her scruples and thought of nothing but of glorying in her paste-board crown—the price of her dishonour—of which some have been fain to make an aureole. There is little enough that is ennobling in the story, little enough of poetry, but such is the plain unvarnished tale. Madame Walewska's only ambition was to make the most of a reality which afforded her all the sweet intoxication of a dream.

She remained three weeks with the Emperor at Finkenstein. She had become quite at home with him and showed him the most tender affection. Some people have been pleased to say her affection was disinterested—the assertion is perhaps a little rash. Had the man she ran away with been a lieutenant, say, or a captain, instead of an Emperor, one might have easily believed in her unselfishness, but the luxuries which she indulged in later on in Paris—handkerchiefs purchased at Leroy's at five pounds apiece and so forth—scarcely admit the belief that she gave herself to Napoleon merely for love. Affection, of course, she

was bound to show him, if being part of her rôle as a *femme entretenue;* otherwise why should she have gone with him at all? People would have said she only left her husband in order to further her own interests; it was then clearly necessary to sprinkle a little poetry over so commonplace an adventure.

Nevertheless, the parties to this irregular union lived as happily as could be. The Emperor always took his meals in the company of his fair paramour—which was more than he did in Paris with his wife—and tried his utmost by the affectionate deference of his manner to obliterate from her mind the memory of her tarnished honour, while she received with an air of half-regretful yet sweet submissiveness the unremitting attentions he bestowed on her. On the Emperor's part the conversation was always characterised by an eager yet gentle gaiety, and on hers by a loving passionate tenderness softened by a delicate nuance of wistful melancholy. In her hours of solitude she would take up a book and abstractedly turn the pages; then, with a sigh, she would rise, go to the window and gaze out on the martial scene below.

The rank and file, when they saw her taking drives with the Emperor and returning with him to the Château, thought, with their natural matter-of-fact way of looking at things, that he ought not to have had his mind occupied with such distractions, seeing how cruelly the army had been decimated at Eylau and what privations they were then enduring from cold and hunger. They knew well enough that it was not to share their sufferings that she had come to Finkenstein, and they regarded her in anything but a favourable light.

"She," they exclaimed scornfully, "she never gave herself to him; she sold herself." And were they far wrong? Napoleon grew daily more attached to this young Slavonian who showed herself as gentle and docile with him as Josephine, without displaying the latter's propensity for shedding tears on every possible occasion. But the Treaty of Tilsit put a sudden end to this stolen honeymoon, and the Emperor had to set out for Paris. The lovers bade each other a tender farewell and swore eternal fidelity, nor did Napoleon release her from his embrace until he had made her promise to come to him in Paris.

On the 27th July the Emperor re-entered his capital. Never before had he been absent from it so long. After receiving the congratulations of the great public bodies on the glorious success of his recent arduous campaign, and attending to the host of matters which had been only awaiting his return in order to be settled, he commanded a solemn *Te Deum* to be sung in the cathedral of Notre-Dame which he attended in great pomp. He had now gained the very pinnacle of his power and glory. As for the public, they were convinced that the Treaty of Tilsit marked the termination of the era of great wars and manifested their joy in the wildest displays of enthusiasm. On every side the incense of adulation was offered up to him by an adoring people. And Madame Walewska?—Alas, she was far away! Thus it came to pass that little by little her memory grew faint and blurred in his imagination. With the resumption of his regular labours he fell again into his old habits of gallantry. Finding himself once more in the midst of his throng of court ladies and readers,

he made no attempt to withstand the temptations that assailed him from every quarter.

This was particularly noticeable during the celebrations which were held on the occasion of his brother Jérôme's marriage with Princess Catherine, daughter of the King of Württemberg. The ceremony, which took place in the Gallery of Diana at the Tuileries, was attended by the utmost pomp and magnificence, but amid all the splendour people had eyes for one alone, and that was for the man who once again had garnered in such a harvest of glorious and imperishable laurels. They beheld him

> . . . cet homme souverain
> Passer, muet et grave, ainsi qu'un Dieu d'airain.

From him "the spectators involuntarily allowed their gaze to fall on a woman of rare beauty who made her appearance for the first time among the ladies of the court,"[1] but not, we may add, at the Château. This was none other than Madame Gazzani who, notwithstanding the attitude of modest reserve she had consistently maintained, despite too the high favour with which she was honoured by the Sovereign, had apparently grown tired of her humble position as reader and applied for promotion. To such promotion her beauty and her accommodating disposition unquestionably entitled her. Her ambition was to be appointed a *dame du palais*, but this the Emperor did not agree to. He decided instead that she should be presented at court, which amounted to practically the same thing. Why he granted her this distinction

[1] Chancelier Pasquier, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 310.

"was not clear, or rather it was only too clear."[1] It was obviously only common fairness to give something to a woman who, for her part, had given him all. And had anyone ventured to point out that the rules of etiquette forbade a mere reader to have the *entrée* to the Empress's receptions, he had only to reply that such a thing was not without precedent, that Mademoiselle Lacoste had been similarly favoured before Madame Gazzani and, what was still more important, that he intended to have it so. Nevertheless the circumstance gave rise to a lot of talk at court; it almost amounted to a scandal. "The Emperor, who as a general rule was but very little influenced in such matters, displayed great weakness on this occasion."[2] But all this was only said in a whisper; for some time now people had grown used to bowing before their Sovereign's caprices. The women consoled themselves for this piece of favouritism, as they called it, by animadverting not on what the lady did so much as on what she said and her manner of saying it. The men—and in matters of this sort men are always very easy-going when their own wives are not in question—considered that there was every excuse, every reason for granting her the much-discussed distinction. "When a woman is as beautiful as she is," they said, "it is no more than she deserves." Beautiful indeed she was; the most beautiful woman at a court where in truth there was no lack of lovely competitors. But her beauty, enhanced as it was by the triumph she felt at having been "presented," was now more dazzling than

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Histoire des salons de Paris*, Vol. IV, p. 147.
[2] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. VI, p. 567.

ever. She entered into court life without a trace of awkwardness, and abandoned herself with delight to the ceaseless round of pleasure and festivity for which she had so powerful an inclination. Her intellectual endowments did not rise above the ordinary, though the social veneer beneath the shelter of which mediocrity so often flourishes unperceived concealed her shortcomings from undiscerning eyes. But for all that she was clever enough to steer comparatively clear of all the envy and jealousy that characterised the Imperial Court. In the end people came to be grateful to her because she had not used her power to do them an ill turn, although she had interfered in one or two intrigues. Those who were wise considered the best course was not to be jealous but to wait. "Another woman," they said to themselves, "will soon supersede the favourite of to-day." Subsequent events swiftly confirmed the accuracy of their anticipations.

During the month of September, being anxious to recuperate after all his labours at home and in the field, Napoleon decided to remove his court to Fontainebleau. Never did monarch surround himelf with greater magnificence than did Napoleon in the castle of François Ier. He remained there for nearly two months. Despite the restrictions of a code of etiquette which was enforced to the very letter, despite too the fact that amusements were regulated with the cut-and-dried precision of military exercises in a barrack, the human passions, restrained but not extinguished, followed their natural course. They were merely disguised by a mask of propriety and forbidden to display themselves too openly. For a woman's eyes or a coveted

post at court, plot and counter-plot, strife and intrigue enjoyed unfettered play beneath the gay cloak of festivity, yet after all it was the Emperor who was the centre of attraction, the cynosure of all eyes and it was

Pour voir cette figure illustre et solennelle

round which the whole world seemed to revolve that everyone at the Château directed his or her efforts.

The stately glades of the forest of Fontainebleau, the mysterious spell which the hush of the woodlands lays on the heart of every man, had, it seems, but little effect on the Emperor. The senses still held their sway over sentiment, and unregenerate as ever he gave himself up to his usual distractions in which there was less of love than of gallantry, less of gallantry than of brutish sensuality.

It had become a habit with him to go for a drive with his wife before dinner, but whatever niggardly measure of poetic feeling found its way to his heart during these excursions was not destined for his wife's ears. He reserved it for the fair Genoese. "He had installed her at Fontainebleau in such a manner that she could go to him whenever he sent for her. People whispered that she used to go down to him at night or else that he betook himself to her room, but in public he showed no more attention to her than to any other woman."[1] For that he had his reasons. In addition to reasons of propriety — if one can speak of propriety in such matters—he was actuated by purely personal motives, by bedchamber policy one may call it, for being a sort of Sultan with his harem about him he was in the

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 212.

habit of transferring his attentions from one lady to another without the slightest compunction—whether on his part or theirs.

At length, weary it seems of his half-hearted *liaison* with Madame Gazzani, he was pleased to take a fancy to a certain Madame de B——, who belonged to the Princess Pauline's household and whose charms he considered more bewitching than those of the lovely Genoese. Now there were three ladies in Princess Pauline's establishment whose names began with a B preceded by a particle, but there is no doubt that the lady in question was Madame de Barral.

Being desirous of reserving to himself entire freedom to act as he pleased, he set to work to win over the woman whom he now wished to put in the place of the fair Genoese who, herself, had both preceded and followed Madame Walewska in his affections. Like Madame Duchâtel and Madame Walewska, Madame de B—— had a husband old enough to be her father. *Dame du palais* to the Princess Pauline, whose friend she was into the bargain, she was as tall as a drum-major, and had a bewitching little head which was crammed full of cleverness; so much so indeed that it was a puzzle to know how such a large stock of wit could be stowed in so small a compass. Finally, no one could manage her sweeping court train with so much skill and elegance as she.

All this was quite enough to awaken the desires of the Emperor. He wrote to her and she replied—how indeed could she have done otherwise? How could she have returned rudeness for civility, particularly when the civility proceeded from the Emperor? It is

true that the civility was really an impertinence, but when they come from a Sovereign ladies are wont to treat impertinences as favours. A regular correspondence therefore sprang up between Princess Pauline's pretty favourite and her Imperial admirer and he sent her as many as three letters a day. Constant delivered them all and Napoleon, who hated letter-writing, must have been very much in love to have indulged in such an epistolary orgy.

One evening the Emperor entrusted his valet with a letter which, owing to an unlucky accident, did not reach its destination. The following is the story :—

"Within the Palace of Fontainebleau," writes Constant, "is an inner garden called the Garden of Diana, to which only Their Majesties had access. It is surrounded on all four sides by buildings. To the left is the Gothic chapel with its gloomy gallery; to the right the great gallery. Between the two were His Majesty's apartments, and finally, immediately in front, closing the quadrangle, were large arcades, behind which were the quarters of the various people attached to the Princes and to the Imperial Household.

"Madame de B——, the lady whom the Emperor had noticed, had rooms behind these arcades on the ground floor. His Majesty informed me that I should find a window open, which I was to enter with caution, and that in the darkness I was to deliver the letter to a person who would ask me for it. The darkness was necessary, for, had there been a light, the open window looking on to the garden would have given rise to remark. Knowing nothing of the arrangement of these rooms I got in at the window, and thought I was walking on the level when I fell with a loud crash over a high step in the alcove of the window. Someone uttered a cry at the noise and immediately after a door shut

suddenly. I sustained slight injuries to my knee, elbow and head. I could scarcely get up again being in such pain and I began to grope about in the darkness, but as I heard nothing more and was afraid of being overheard by someone who ought not to know of my presence, I made up my mind to return to the Emperor, to whom I recounted my misadventure."[1]

The Emperor listened with all a lover's attention to his *valet de chambre*, whose fall, at which he laughed heartily, consoled him for the non-success of his mission. Being in a gay humour, he added, "Ah, so there is a step, is there; that's as well to know. Let us wait till Madame de B—— has recovered from her fright, and then I will go to her and you shall go with me."

Constant withdrew. After about an hour had elapsed the Emperor rejoined him and they went out together by the door of his study, which opened on to the garden. The night was very dark and their path lay diagonally across the square. The *valet de chambre*, who knew the way, acted as guide. Napoleon was in high fettle at this expedition, which had something of the romantic about it. Its mysterious and adventurous character took his fancy immensely and he followed Constant drinking in with delight the sweet and cool night air of Fontainebleau. They went straight to the window which the valet had previously entered. It was still open. Constant assisted Napoleon to clamber through it, for the latter was no longer the spare wiry man that he was during the Italian campaign and the Consulate.

[1] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 382.

He had been putting on flesh for two years past and was now decidedly stout. Having steered him clear of the treacherous step his *valet de chambre* retired.

The Emperor did not return till morning. He left Madame de B——'s by the same window at which he had entered. Inasmuch as it is not too rash to assume that he discovered the exit by which Madame de B—— had fled at Constant's approach, we may reasonably suppose that the lady herself played the part of guide to her Imperial visitor. Constant's testimony is not to be gainsaid. However, the Duchesse d'Abrantès, in what appears to be a reply to Constant's Memoirs, which were published before her own, says, "It is untrue that the Emperor ever succeeded in his designs on Madame de Barral," for whom she admits that "he had a strong liking." "I am acquainted," she says, "with the whole story. I am aware that the Emperor wrote to her himself, which he scarcely ever did in the sort of transient *liaison* of which this would have been an example had not Madame de B—— been sensible enough not to give way before his dazzling prestige. What an aureole of glory, what a resplendent nimbus ever shone around him in those days! To withstand his allurement a woman must have had her heart engaged elsewhere, for no wisdom, no virtue, was proof against his fascination."[1]

If in order to convince us that Madame de B—— never yielded to the Emperor's solicitations Madame d'Abrantès states that her affections were engaged elsewhere—and she was in fact in love with M. Achille de Septeuil—the proof is not conclusive. True, love is

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. VI, p. 569.

generally a prophylactic against love, but there are exceptions to the rule. Moreover, if it is to be efficacious it must be genuine love and not a mere fancy or caprice. Napoleon was very fond of Madame Walewska, but that by no means prevented him from falling in love with Madame Gazzani, Madame de Barral, and many other women besides. Why then should it be assumed that the women were less inconstant than the Great Man himself, especially when inconstancy would have been to their advantage. The fact that she was in love with a man other than her husband, and that the whole Court knew about it, implies in itself a certain elasticity of the affections, not to mention principles. Why, therefore, we may enquire, should Madame de Barral's love for young Colonel de Septeuil, the son of Louis XVI's first *valet de chambre*, have prevented her from responding to the advances of her Sovereign? It argued, to put it mildly, no narrow conception of virtue for a woman to be attached to the household of Princess Pauline, "whose behaviour cast an unpleasant reflection on all the young and pretty women of her Court." Then, again, we are told that "no virtue was proof against his fascination." If such be the conclusion drawn by the brilliant diarist of the Empire, it certainly sounds very much like the *de profundis* of Madame de Barral's virtue. Taking all the probabilities into account, there seems very little reason for doubting the personal testimony of the worthy Constant.

In spite of all the pleasure which his nocturnal expedition had occasioned him, Napoleon soon grew tired of a *liaison* which involved constant constraint and circumspection. The romance which had begun

sensationally with a window entered at dead of night degenerated in the end to nothing more than a passing fancy. It is unlikely that Madame de B—— was the first to show coolness, for with the evident intention of conciliating the man who had brought the Emperor to her, rather than from any inordinate regard for his personal welfare, she sent a confidential messenger to Constant the day after the adventure to enquire for him and to express how deeply vexed she had been at his mishap. It was Napoleon who broke off the relationship or, rather, allowed it to die of inanition.

Having grown weary of Madame de B—— the Emperor's heart began to throb with yet another passion. He seldom vouchsafed it a respite.

Who was the new favourite? To tell the truth there was more than one. Like the bees Napoleon hovered from flower to flower.

Sur différentes fleurs l'abeille se repose
Et fait du miel de toute chose.

After the manner of the bee he was for extracting love from every one of his caprices.

It has been said that Madame Savary was included among these "favourites of a day."[1] *Née* Félicité de Faudoas and a distant cousin of the Empress Josephine, the future Duchesse de Rovigo was one of the most beautiful women of the Imperial Court. "She possesses," the Duchesse d'Abrantès says, "the most marvellous figure I have ever seen."[2] She also

[1] Général Thiébault, *Mémoires*, Vol. V, p. 305: "Madame Savary, who was Napoleon's mistress."

[2] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Memoires sur la Restauration*, Vol. II, p. 166.

possessed the most marvellous unconcern ever heard of, and as this unconcern, which she owed to her Creole origin, was extended to her lovers as well as to her husband and her brother,[1] she did not retain the Emperor's favour for any length of time. It appears that she consoled herself with other admirers, and that thereupon the Emperor with reprehensible levity diverted himself by telling the General about some of his wife's escapades. It was ever his custom in such cases. Whenever he heard of unorthodox behaviour on the part of a woman there was nothing he took a more eager delight in than in telling her husband all about it. It was hardly charitable on his part, for he ought not to have forgotten the pain it had caused him to hear the revelations about Josephine. When talking to Savary, however, he commanded him in so formal a manner to lie low and make no fuss that the latter, who was obedience personified with Napoleon, pretended to know nothing and continued to live with his wife as though she were a very pattern of fidelity. It is true that he had been collecting information on his own account, but what he had learned had wrought such confusion in his feelings that the best thing, he saw it plainly, was to shut his eyes to everything. Such is always the wisest conclusion for a man to come to when he thinks more of his peace of mind than of his dignity. It was also the advice given him by the Emperor, who when speaking one day to a young woman of mutual unfaithfulness of married people, said, "Well, you are shocked about a very small matter. It is, they say, a very trifling thing for us when we know of it and

[1] See the *Mémoires* of Général de Saint-Chamans, p. 94.

nothing at all when we don't. What then do you think you ought to say? Shall I tell you? 'I am all attention, Sire.' Why then, nothing at all. And as you women cannot hold your tongues, if you say anything let it be to signify your approval."[1]

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. VI, p. 63.

CHAPTER IX

The Princess Stéphanie again—Eagerness of the ladies of the Court to please Napoleon—What the *Mémorial* says thereon—Some reflections on the interview at Mantua and the passage in Lucien's Memoirs, which deals with it—Masked balls—Napoleon's predilection for them—Adventures at these entertainments—A ball at the Grand Duchess de Berg's and what came of it—Mademoiselle Guillebeau—A *danseuse* appointed reader at the Court; she becomes a "favourite" of the Emperor—End of an idyll—An adventure at Madrid—The Emperor dislikes scent—Madame Gazzani yet again—Madame Walewska joins the Emperor at Schoenbrunn—She becomes *enceinte*—The Emperor's escapades at Vienna—Napoleon takes a fancy to Madame de Mathis—The Imperial divorce—The Princess de Carignan.

AMONG the young and beautiful women who adorned the Imperial Court at Fontainebleau was one whose acquaintance we have already made, to wit, Madame Duchâtel. Since the Coronation, when her *liaison* with the Emperor formed the subject of a deal of tittle-tattle, her behaviour had evoked no comment. It has been asserted that Napoleon was fain to revive the embers of that bygone passion during his stay at Fontainebleau, but if so—and such a thing is just possible—he went to work so covertly that the Court folk, for all their keenness of vision in such matters, never detected a sign of it. At all events, the affair was not of long duration.

The wayward and pretty Stéphanie de Beauharnais, Grand Duchess of Baden, also came to Fontainebleau,

but this time the Emperor was far from regarding her with favour. In fact, he had sufficient irons in the fire elsewhere without entering on a flirtation with the *petite pensionnaire*. His attempt of the preceding year had scarcely been encouraging, and he had unquestionably proved the laughing-stock of the farce. But Stéphanie, frivolous as ever, had been seized with the moral vertigo that prevailed at the Imperial Court, and she set people talking about her again by a somewhat serious indiscretion.

It will be remembered that after the Treaty of Tilsit Napoleon's youngest brother, Jérôme, had been made King of Westphalia, and that he had wedded the Princess Catherine, daughter of the King of Bavaria. The young Princess conceived an ardent and tender affection for her husband, as was her duty and her right, but it does not appear that her fickle consort returned her love, for he had not been married more than a month, when, meeting the inconstant Stéphanie at Fontainebleau, he took it into his head to follow his brother's example and fall in love with the hare-brained little creature, while she responded with heedless alacrity to his advances. One evening at a reception their manœuvring became so apparent that Queen Catherine noticed it. So overcome was she that, gasping for breath, she suddenly fell down in a dead faint. Assistance was hurriedly rendered, and she was borne into an adjoining apartment. While she was being restored to animation the Emperor was overheard rebuking his brother in no measured terms. Jérôme hung his head, and, approaching his wife, endeavoured to make her forget his conduct by protesting to her that she was

mistaken and that he loved but her in all the world. Stéphanie, who for the second time in a single year had sown discord in other people's houses, on the pretext perhaps that all was not well in her own, was next day the recipient of a stern reprimand from the Empress. Madame de Rémusat herself was entrusted with the task of lecturing the *enfant terrible*. She did so, and her sermon contributed to modify the conduct of the youthful Grand Duchess; but what, no doubt, contributed in an equal degree to this result was that the Emperor, who was no longer enamoured of his adopted daughter, had altered all the ceremonial arrangements which had been instituted in her honour the year before. Henceforth he merely treated her as a Princess of the Confederation of the Rhine, and Stéphanie, who felt herself lowered in the general estimation by this change, became more staid, and began to show some attention to her husband. She returned to Baden without expressing any regret at leaving France, and since then no further adventure marked her career. It was she who came to Paris during the presidency of Prince Louis to do the honours of the Élysée to her cousin's guests. She saw him re-establish the Imperial Throne in Paris, and died, full of years, at Nice in 1860.

As a general rule the Emperor was under no necessity to make overtures to the ladies. They were adepts at sparing him the trouble and at giving him to understand that their willingness to abandon themselves to his wishes was just as unlimited as their admiration for him. The *Mémorial* mentions a little conversation that took place one day at Longwood. It

turned on the presentation of women at Court, on their embarrassment, their secret inclinations, their ideas and ambitions. Madame de Montholon revealed the secrets of some ladies of her acquaintance, which tended to show that if in certain Paris salons complaints were made about the coarseness of the Emperor's manners, the harshness of his language, and the ugliness of his person, there were other people, better disposed, better informed, and differently impressed, who used to praise the gentleness of his voice, the delicacy of his smile, and above all his wonderful hands, which were, it was said, almost absurdly beautiful.

"These minor advantages, it was remarked, united to great power and to still greater glory, were bound to turn certain heads, to create certain romances. And how many women were there at the Tuileries who endeavoured to make him the sharer of sentiments which perhaps they genuinely felt themselves!

"The Emperor laughed at our remarks and conjectures, and then confessed that in spite of all his manifold duties and the pomp and circumstance which surrounded him, he thought that he too had occasionally noticed something of the sort. The less timid or the more eager among them had, he went on, even gone to the length of begging, and sometimes obtaining audiences. Then we began to laugh in turn and told him that time was when these same audiences had ministered not a little to our gaiety. But the Emperor protested with all seriousness that our inferences had been quite at fault."[1]

Such protestations were not the invariable rule, and one evening, when the conversation turned on the same subject, he made no defence and was not above allowing

[1] *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, Vol. III, p. 416.

a little contented vanity to appear at having been, in spite of all his greatness, a lucky dog with the women. Nor at St. Helena did he object to exchanging stories on this slightly unsavoury subject.

"'Sire,' said M. de Las Cases on another occasion, 'it has been alleged that when at the height of your power you submitted to be led captive in Cupid's chains, and that you became the hero of a love affair. People have said that, surprised at the resistance offered by a certain lady who had no pretensions to greatness, you conceived such an attachment to her that you wrote her a dozen letters, and that she even led you to adopt a disguise and to go alone by night to her house in the heart of Paris.'

"'But how did people get to know about it?' he asked with a smile which certainly did not imply a denial. 'Of course,' he went on, 'they did not fail to add that it was the greatest imprudence of my life, for had she not been an honest woman, who could have told what might not have befallen me, alone and in disguise, amid all the perils which encompassed me? But what did they say next?'

"'Sire, they affirmed that Your Majesty's issue was not confined to the King of Rome, and the secret history of the times assigned him two elder brothers; the one the offspring of a beautiful foreigner to whom you were said to have been deeply attached in a distant land; the other the fruit of a relationship nearer home, in the very heart indeed of your capital. It has been stated that both children came to La Malmaison before our departure, one of them being brought thither by his mother, and the other by his tutor, and that they were both living portraits of their father.'

"The Emperor was greatly amused at such detailed knowledge and, once his gaiety was aroused, he set himself freely and without restraint to review the events of his early years."[1]

[1] *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, Vol. I, p. 267.

In spite of his flirtations with Madame Gazzani and Madame de Barral, and perhaps with other women as well,[1] Napoleon was still in love with Madame Walewska. He told his brother Lucien so at the famous interview they had together at Mantua at the end of this same year 1807. The conversation, as reported by Lucien, is altogether too interesting and too closely connected with our subject not to be quoted and commented upon in these pages.

"He (Napoleon) said that it was a fact that he had had no children in his earlier days, but that he now had several, and two in particular of whose parentage he entertained no doubts. One of them, he said, was by a young woman who had been a pupil at Madame Campan's with Hortense, and the other was the offspring of a beautiful young Polish dame married to an old man who, he said, was impotent, adding, with a little satisfied air, that 'he knew something about that matter.' The poor woman had been sacrificed to Plutus.

"'She is a charming woman, an angel,' he went on. 'Ah! of her it might be said in very truth that her soul is as beautiful as her face.'

"'You are amused to see me in love; well, I am in love indeed, but I never allow love to get the

[1] "In a police record of the Restoration period I found that Mademoiselle Cochelet had been a mistress of Napoleon I" (Ch. Nauroy, *Les Secrets des Bonaparte*, p. 171). But this is hardly likely. Mademoiselle Cochelet, who was as tall as a drum-major, was, according to all accounts, too plain to have attracted the Emperor's attention. At the Court of Queen Hortense, where she was a reader, she was nicknamed Mademoiselle Cochelaide. She married Commandant Parquin, whose *Souvenirs* are of such curious interest.

It has also been stated, with some show of truth, that Napoleon took away one of his brother Jérôme's mistresses, of whom the latter was excessively fond. It was said to have been one of the principal causes of estrangement between the two brothers. (Vide Michaud's *Biographie universelle, Supplément*, Vol. LXXVII, under Pigault-Lebrun.)

upper hand of my policy, which demands that I should wed a Princess, though I had far rather crown my mistress.'"

We have more than one comment to make on what Lucien here reports. In the first place he perpetrates an egregious blunder when he makes his brother say he was the father of a child by Madame Walewska. Napoleon could not possibly have made such a statement at the time in question, for the simple reason that the child, who was conceived at Schoenbrünn in 1809, during the Wagram campaign, was not born until the 4th May 1810 at the Château de Walewitz in Poland.[1] It follows that Napoleon could not have made mention in December 1807 of a child who did not make his entry into the world till 1810. The error is a glaring one. It may further be observed that the Emperor had made no startling progress in the art of choosing a wife, for, according to Lucien, he appears to have thought of marrying Madame Walewska. The *bona fides* of Lucien's report, however, may perhaps be open to question. Lucien himself never gained experience. Being left a widower, he again married one of his mistresses, and it is possible that he ascribes these words to his brother in order to excuse his own conduct. Moreover, Madame Walewska was not as yet a widow. For the rest, Napoleon must have vastly deceived himself to say of a woman, because she had forsaken her husband for a lover, that "her soul was as beautiful as her face." If her soul had been so very beautiful, she would scarcely have begun by neglecting her duty. People may apply what epithets

[1] And not in Paris, as Madame de Rémusat states in her Memoirs.

they will to those who hold these convictions; they may call them "narrow-minded, stunted, behind the times," and so forth; yet, in spite of all, the fact remains that devotion to duty is the only true test of morality, and by morality we mean that assemblage of principles which should ever lead an upright and sincere man or woman towards the *good* in all things, for goodness is nothing more nor less than the moral ideal. All else is sophistry.

Without doubt Napoleon was very fond of Madame Walewska, and next to Josephine and Marie Louise she was the woman whom he loved best. His love for her, however, had nothing exclusive about it and did not prevent him from indulging without any qualms of conscience in numerous other infidelities. But the love he had entertained for Josephine, until she broke his heart by her own unfaithfulness, had been absolutely exclusive. That was love in very truth, the love that takes hold of a man and renders him blind to all else, that is absorbed utterly in the life of the beloved one, that regards everything in its relationship to her, and conceives of her as the only woman in the world to be desired. If Napoleon, instead of marrying a woman ten years older than himself—which sooner or later was bound to bring him under the curse of infidelity[1]—had chosen a virtuous woman of an age more suited to his own, there is every reason to believe that he would have proved an exemplary husband, that he would have loved his home, and that he would

[1] It is, however, interesting to note that it was his wife who set him the example of unfaithfulness; and that it was she who was largely responsible for Napoleon's moral debasement and for his becoming the mere creature of his sensual appetites.

have been none the less happy for that—nor his country either.

Returning to Paris after the fruitless interview with his brother Lucien, the Emperor resumed his ordinary course of life. Winter had begun, and the season which ensued was one of the most brilliant on record. Never before had there been so many balls in Paris. The Tuileries set the example. The theatre which the Emperor had commanded to be built had just been completed and presented a magnificent appearance. Full-dress and fancy-dress balls were held there amid scenes of unexampled splendour, and the Emperor was as gay as a sub-lieutenant. "Disguised from head to foot, yet recognisable without much difficulty owing to his familiar figure, he used to proceed from one apartment to another, leaning as a rule on Duroc's arm. He freely accosted the women, and some of his observations scarcely erred on the side of decorum. If he was accosted in his turn and was unable to discover immediately who was speaking to him, he would tear off her mask, sufficiently revealing his own identity by this masterful defiance of the rules of good breeding. He also took great delight in availing himself of his disguise to tease certain married men with stories, some true and some false, about their wives."[1] Nevertheless, there was great rivalry among the women to win his attentions. As they were not invariably successful they used to fall back on the most important personages of state, and did their best to disturb the calm of these unfortunate guests who, however, were only too eager to be victimised.

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 333.

In the masked balls which he attended the Emperor was always sure, says the Memorial, to meet a certain lady who, year after year, reminded him of their former intimacy and eagerly begged him to grant her the favour of being received at Court. She was very agreeable, very easy-going and very good-looking, and it is safe to say that many men were indebted to her for more than a little. In spite of that the Emperor had a liking for her and always used to make reply—"Yes, I do not deny that you are a charming woman, but just consider a little what it is you are asking, and then say yourself whether I ought to grant your request. You have two or three husbands, and children by everybody more or less. One would readily condone your first false step. And the second lapse, well, that might be forgiven perhaps; but the next, and the next, and the next! Now, put yourself in my place as an Emperor and say how you would act. What can I do? who am in duty bound to restore a certain amount of decorum!" Whereat the fair suppliant would hold her peace, or say, "At any rate let me continue to hope," and add that she should look for better fortune next year. "And both of us," said the Emperor, "duly kept our appointment."[1]

It is difficult to identify the woman Napoleon had in mind, though the description rather suggests Madame Tallien. She was certainly a different woman from the one referred to by Madame Georgette Ducrest in the following story, which forms an appropriate appendix to the one we have just related:—

"One night, at a masked ball at the Tuileries, I

[1] *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, Vol. III, p. 139.

noticed a grey domino followed by two tall figures clad in black whose task, it appeared to me, was to watch over the Great Man and to keep an eye on anyone who might approach him too closely. Keeping my attention fixed on this group I became certain that I was not mistaken. The grey domino drew near to a very pretty woman covered with diamonds, who was seated a short distance from myself. With his hands clasped behind his back he stood gazing fixedly at her for several minutes without uttering a word. She began to blush and tremble, and at length told her unwelcome inquisitor in tremulous tones that she did not think she knew him. Still the unknown said nothing, but stood like one riveted to the spot, gazing at this woman who seemed so ill at ease. Suddenly she arose in great agitation and exclaimed in alarm, 'Such a look belongs to the Emperor alone. Oh! would that I had never come!' She sped precipitately from the room, and the people around said that she was a woman who had been mixed up in some scandal which had brought about a divorce. It seems she had not been invited, but with unparalleled audacity had obtained admission by using a friend's ticket. Napoleon had once been deeply in love with her, but his love had turned to hatred, and such were the means he employed to banish her from an assembly to which she had purposely not been invited. Her guilty conscience had made the Emperor's silence as peremptory as a command."[1]

Though the Emperor sought for adventures at these masked balls, adventures sometimes came to him of their own accord, as for example, that which we relate below, though it is true that in this case the adventure itself was not entered upon until some few days after the ball at which he had had his attention drawn to the woman who was to be its heroine.

[1] *Mémoires sur l'impératrice Joséphine*, Vol. II, p. 65.

It was on the occasion of a magnificent function at his sister's, the Grand Duchess of Berg. "The opera *La Vestale*, which had only recently been put on the stage and was exceedingly popular, had suggested the idea of a quadrille of priests and vestals who made their entry to delicious strains of flutes and harps. In addition, there were wizards, a Swiss wedding-scene, a Tyrolese betrothal, etc."[1] Constant goes on to say that all the costumes were remarkable for their richness and correctness of detail, and adds that a storeroom of dresses had been fitted up in the palace so that the dancers could change their attire four or fives times a night, with the result that a fresh ball seemed to be commenced with every change of dress.

The Grand Duchess of Berg, who wished to gain a reputation for amiability, and was also anxious to obtain pardon for the intrigue she had carried on with Junot while the Emperor was away in Poland, spared herself no efforts in doing the honours of her house. On the occasion to which Constant refers there was a quadrille which attracted a great deal of attention and formed a universal topic of conversation for several days after. The Princess, who had directed the rehearsals and selected the costumes, led it in person. What was in those days known as a quadrille was in reality a sort of ballet in little. The quadrille in question consisted of sixteen peasant girls—the Comtesse Duchâtel, the Comtesse Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angely, Madame de Colbert, Mademoiselle de La Vauguyon, the Baronne de Montmorency, etc. The whole of this band of titled peasantry was heralded

[1] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 17.

by a bailiff, whose part was taken by Mademoiselle Adélaïde de Lagrange, who carried a white crook in her hand and wore a monumental peruke, and her entry at the head of her little kirtled brigade caused a great sensation. The dances ceased for a few moments and then began again more gaily than ever.

The ball was in full swing when suddenly there arose the noise of a dispute. There were loud angry words, and an imperious voice was heard saying, "I insist on her leaving my house!" People looked at one another in amazement at hearing such words at the Élysée; nor was their astonishment diminished when they recognised that the voice was that of the Grand Duchess of Berg. She was speaking with great animation to one of her chamberlains, commanding him to turn out of the ball-room the unlucky young woman who was directing Queen Hortense's quadrille. This is how the young person in question came to be at the Élysée.

Queen Hortense, who had also undertaken to get up a quadrille, had conceived the idea of arraying her danseuses as vestal virgins. The opera *La Vestale*, as we have stated, was then all the rage and everything had to be *à la Vestale*. In spite of a slight drawback Queen Hortense was taking part in the quadrille; the drawback was that she was in the eighth month of her pregnancy, being big with the child who eventually became Napoleon III. Her condition therefore was by no means an appropriate set-off to her costume. But the comic incongruity of a vestal in an advanced state of pregnancy, far from deterring her, greatly tickled her fancy. "It will be capital fun!" she said, and in order

to give additional zest to the affair she wanted the quadrille to be led by a "Folie" with bells in her cap and a bauble in her hand. The Secretary of the Grand Duchess of Berg spoke to her in this connexion of a certain young woman who enjoyed the reputation of having a perfect knowledge of all the fashionable dances. This was Mademoiselle Guillebeau, who was in the habit of giving dancing displays with a tambourine in the salons of the great, and Queen Hortense was only too pleased to avail herself of the services of so skilled a performer. She was the only one, it seems, who was willing to appear attired strictly in character, and to this Queen Hortense attached supreme importance. She had, moreover, an exceedingly fine figure, and her flame-coloured tights displayed to the utmost advantage the perfection of her form. It seems that the Grand Duke of Berg, the great headstrong Murat, had manifested a desire to examine her lissome beauty at rather too close a range and that, fired no doubt by her flame-coloured fleshings, he was just engaged in kissing the girl when Madame Murat arrived on the scene. Hence the Grand Duchess's wrath and her unseemly outburst. "I will not have this creature coming here playing the fool in my very palace," cried she.

The Emperor was present at this ball, attired in a disguise that completely concealed his identity. He was talking to a woman and of course love was the topic. He was telling her "that his affection for her was subordinate to one thing only—and that was to his strength of will."

"I do not wish to be known as the little Louis XIV," he said. "I am not willing that a woman should be the

means of my appearing before the eyes of the world as a feeble creature without a heart to call his own."

"But it is just the heart which we ought to allow to tell its own tale."

"Bah!" interrupted the Emperor. "There you are; just like all the rest with your stupid sentimentalism. The heart! What the deuce do you take your heart to be? It is just a part of your body through which a big vein passes, wherein the blood flows more quickly when you run."[1]

It was at this moment that he heard the voice of the Duchess of Berg raised in anger.

"Hullo! What's that?" he exclaimed. And getting up he went to find out the cause of the disturbance. His partner accompanied him.

He was at once informed how matters stood, and witnessed the tears and despair of the fair Guillebeau, who had nothing but her fool's bauble to wipe her eyes with.

"See what comes of your romantic arrangements," said the Emperor. "The poor little soul trusted to what our mealy-mouthed Murat told her—perhaps she will go and drown herself now. Eh, what do you say?"

His partner had begun to weep.

"My dear," said the Emperor to her, "I can't stand seeing even Josephine weep, and I love her better than any other woman in the world. By that I mean that you are wasting your time. Adieu; I come to masked-balls to amuse myself."

So saying he went and mingled with the throng.

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. VII, p. 222.

Justifiable as his strictures on Murat were in themselves, he might have shown a little more leniency since he was very soon to follow his example. But he did not know at the time how easy was the virtue of the lady who had excited his compassion. Murat knew the "petite Guillebeau" well enough to visit her at her house in the Rue Basse du Rempart, and had got well beyond the mere preliminary skirmishes in his flirtation with her. Junot was also on her visiting list, and other Generals besides. In short, her tears notwithstanding, the dancing girl had not the slightest intention of drowning herself in consequence of having been turned out of the ball-room; neither had she the least idea of the high distinction which she was to owe to her adventure.

Queen Hortense, who considered that her dignity had suffered in consequence of the high-handed procedure on the part of the Grand Duchess, took up the cause of the dancing girl and pleaded energetically on her behalf. Having introduced her there she considered herself bound to come to her support. The Princess replied with harshness and they even went so far as to exchange words of a regrettable nature. The result of it all was that the Empress Josephine, prompted by Hortense, offered a readership to the young dancer; which it was thought would have the effect of greatly annoying her sister-in-law. The Emperor, out of pity for the girl and perhaps with an *arrière-pensée* in which benevolence had no concern, gave his consent to an arrangement which he considered well calculated to make all hearts easy. He left shortly after for Bayonne in company with

the Empress, Mademoiselle Guillebeau being of the party.

The unlucky child did not remain long at the Château de Marrac, where their Majesties had taken up their quarters. "A few days later," wrote the Duc Victor de Broglie, who had seen the royal party pass through Les Ormes on their way to Marrac, "we beheld one of these favourites going home again in a very tearful state, and those who were inquisitive enough to ask the meaning of it were told by the valet who accompanied her that she had just been dismissed for taking too much on herself."[1]

M. Victor de Broglie, who was a member of the Imperial Council of State, is not, as a rule, too indulgent towards Napoleon; but the reader of whom he speaks and who was none other than the little Guillebeau had been very considerably so. The Emperor, who met her daily in the narrow corridors of the little Château de Marrac and saw her every evening in the Empress's salon, began to share the views of Murat, Junot and the rest, and to think her just as bewitching as the little Lacoste, of whom she strongly reminded him. Nor could he help observing that the natural tints of her fresh rosy cheeks had a decided advantage over the artificial red and white with which Josephine adorned hers. To cut a long story short, Mademoiselle Guillebeau treated the Emperor no more harshly than she had treated his generals. Everything then was going on beautifully when Josephine caught her fickle spouse and the reader preparing to turn the pages of the Book of Love together. The lady suddenly

[1] Duc de Broglie, *Souvenirs*, Vol. I, p. 58.

dropped to zero in her estimation. She flew into a passion: there was a scene with the Emperor, and the unfortunate "Folly"—who had acted her part but too well—was turned out of Marrac as she had been out of the Élysée. The Emperor, however, adopted a less summary procedure than his sister; a woman who granted him her favours was thenceforth sacred in his eyes. As in the priesthood, the fact of a woman having once belonged to him gave her in his eyes an indelible character. He therefore gave orders that a communication should be sent to the girl's mother, telling her to come and fetch her daughter. But as Josephine was in a hurry to see the back of her and was disinclined to retain the benefit of her services till her mother's arrival, she obtained the Emperor's consent to her being sent back to Paris. So to Paris La Guillebeau was bundled off with a *femme de chambre* and a footman for escort. She met her mother on the way, and they wept together as they thought of the eclipse of a future which had dawned so fairly for them, but which, like a soap-bubble of brilliant hues, had vanished into nothingness just as they thought to grasp it.

Nothing more was heard of her during the remainder of Napoleon's reign. We are told, however, that she subsequently married a Monsieur Sourdeau, Consul at Tangier. But at the Restoration, just as Wellington had flaunted it with the Emperor's cast-off mistress, La Grassini, so the Duc de Berry bedizened himself with La Guillebeau, that piece of flotsam flung off from the amorous orgies of the dauntless blades of the Grand Army and their leader Napoleon.

Madame d'Abrantès, commenting upon the exalted rank of La Guillebeau's lovers, finds therein "a proof of the greatness of her soul and the loftiness of her feelings," which is surely a strange perversion of the meaning of the words or a remarkable misconception of the motives underlying her conduct. There was no greatness of soul or loftiness of feeling about Mademoiselle Guillebeau, but having a keener eye for the main chance than the majority of her class, with the additional advantage of possessing a most *rusé* individual for a mother, she simply regarded it as better business to tap the resources of the great men of the Empire, including the Emperor himself, and of the Duc de Berry, heir to the throne of France, than to live on short commons with a clerk or a lackey. Having cast her honour on the scrap-heap, she merely played her cards better than the other unchaste women of her time. But let us not, for goodness sake, talk about greatness of soul and loftiness of feeling in connexion with such behaviour.

After the completion of that disreputable piece of business which involved him in the war with Spain, Napoleon left Marrac and returned to Paris, but only just to enter the city and be off again. Setting out almost immediately for Germany, he met the Emperor Alexander, with whom he had the famous interview at Erfurt; and then, with his mind at rest regarding the North, he proceeded to assume in person the command of the forces in Spain.

To remain faithful to his Josephine in the land of dark-eyed, dainty-footed, voluptuous beauties would have been too great a strain for him. Thus one day he

evinced a desire to make a personal inspection of the charms of the Spanish women and find out for himself whether they rivalled the ladies of Prussia, Poland and France; whether their type of beauty was to be compared with the Genoese and the Creole.

He had not been long in Madrid when M. de Bausset, Prefect of the Palace, remarked in his presence that he had been to the Grand Theatre and seen an actress there who had made so delightful an impression on him that he could not get her out of his head. She was quite young, fifteen or sixteen at the outside. Her eyes were dark and lustrous, her hair black, while her soft white skin gleamed with the transparent pearl-like whiteness of a camellia's petal. Moreover, she was "a very piece of virtue." "Oh yes," he protested, "joking apart, she is as chaste as any old nun." In short, she was in every respect a pattern girl.

Such was the description given by the Prefect, and we may assume that, courtier-like, his object was to give Napoleon to understand without saying anything definite that the little marvel was at his disposal. It was one way of getting into the Emperor's good graces. "Besides," he added carelessly, "she could not be anything else but virtuous. She is under the eye of a wicked old duenna, her aunt, whose intention it is to exploit the girl's virginity and to barter her one fine day against the jingling ducats of any man rich enough to purchase such a 'king's portion.'"

The Emperor listened in silence to Monsieur de Bausset's monologue. The latter having added, by way of rounding off his story, that she had neither father nor mother, the Emperor told him jokingly that

he would rather like to see the little paragon. Monsieur de Bausset was far too shrewd a courtier not to take the hint, and hurried off as fast as his fat legs could carry him to interview the wicked aunt and inform her of the Emperor's benevolent intentions towards her virtuous niece. The discussion did not take long. Terms were soon agreed upon, and when night came the worthy aunt convoyed the youthful Madrilenian to Napoleon's head-quarters. We must not omit to mention that she had decked her out for the occasion with as many ribbons and fallals as a mule from the stables of Manuel Godoy, Prince of the Peace, would have displayed when caparisoned for the procession of St. Theresa. Further, out of a superabundance of respect for the Emperor, she had upset on her hair, her handkerchief, her clothes—and goodness knows where else—all the perfumes of Arabia Felix.

Now if there was one thing the Emperor loathed it was scent. The only kind he could endure was eau-de-Cologne; and so when Constant brought in this little dressed-up scent-bottle he took a hurried step backwards. The poor child, who, like her aunt, thought her triumph assured by such unstinted libations of fragrant essences, nearly dropped down on the spot when she perceived their disastrous effect upon the Emperor. The grievousness of the discovery at once mirrored itself in her face, giving her such a queer and at the same time such a taking air of bewilderment that Napoleon forthwith conquered his aversion to scents and hastened to show her every mark of sympathy.

Constant retired. He had been away a good two hours when there was such a startling, agitated tugging

at the Emperor's bell that the faithful valet rushed off in terror lest something awful had occurred. Spanish women are such fanatical creatures, thought he, and perhaps the whole thing was a mere subterfuge invented to get herself into the Emperor's room so that she might despatch him with a blow of the stiletto (which every Spanish woman is said to carry in her garter) and so rid her country of its iniquitous invader. He went in prepared for the worst. No Emperor was there! The girl stood staring at him with an excited, almost wild expression on her face. He was about to question her when he heard the Emperor in the next room shouting out, "Constant, clear the little thing out as soon as you can. She will do for me with her scent. I cannot stand it. Open all the doors and windows, but whatever you do get her outside. Hurry up!"

Completely reassured, Constant tried to get her to understand that her perfumes made the Emperor feel ill. It was no easy matter to make his meaning clear, since she knew no French, but at last by graphic gestures and grimaces he managed to achieve his object. The poor child began to cry, and begged him not to send her off like that in the middle of the night. It was the most difficult thing in the world to convince her that every means had been taken to ensure her *incognito*, and that a carriage with springs soft as the use for which it was kept, and blinds lowered like the drooping lashes of the fair ones it conveyed to the Emperor, was ready and waiting for her. She wept more copiously at everything he said; nor did she regain her composure till Constant, wiser in his actions than in his words,

placed on the table the gold which the Emperor had directed him to give her.

Meanwhile, Napoleon was sitting in his dressing-room holding his head in his hands. At last when the air had been freshened and the windows shut again, he came back into his room breathing anathema against all women who had the bad taste to cover themselves with scent, and as Constant relieved him of his dressing-gown he kept saying, "I very nearly fainted, I did indeed—just like a little fine lady."

His adventure gave him a distaste for attempting any others of the kind in Spain. Moreover, the war assumed a national character and he might have been apprehensive lest the Spaniards with their fanatical patriotism should prompt a woman to assassinate him. Then, again, he did not remain long in Spain. He learned from the trusty La Valette of his sister Caroline's conspiracy, which aimed at nothing less than deposing him and putting her husband Murat, whom she completely dominated, upon the throne of France in his stead.[1] He was on the point of dealing a crushing blow at the English forces, which were in full retreat before him, but he immediately decided to abandon a movement the success of which his skilful preparations had placed beyond all doubt and, handing over the command to Marshal Soult, set out at once for Paris. There he was confronted with the task of fitting out an army against the Austrians, whose object it was to avail themselves of his difficulties in Spain in order to denounce the Treaty of Presburg.

[1] See the author's work entitled *Les sœurs de Napoléon* from p. 450 onwards.

The Emperor remained some months in Paris, but so multifarious were his duties that he had scarcely any time to spare for affairs of gallantry; or if he did so it was with such secrecy and despatch that no one knew anything about them. There is some ground for supposing, however, that he returned to Madame Gazzani, and that she, fearful of being again forsaken, was not content with merely bowing to the caprices of her exalted lover but endeavoured to subdue him to her will. Whether this was the case or not, he burst into the Empress's room one morning exclaiming, "I don't want to see Madame Gazzani about you any more. She must go back to Italy." Josephine, who was delighted to hear him give this order, which showed that he had broken or wished to break with the fair Genoese, nevertheless took up the cudgels on her behalf, though two years previously she would have been only too glad to see her dismissed. As rumours of an approaching divorce had been renewed more persistently than ever during the Emperor's absence in Spain as well as since his return, Josephine gently alluded to the matter in her reply. "You well know, my dear," said she, "that the best way to rid yourself of Madame Gazzani is to let her remain with me. Suffer me then to keep her. We shall mingle our tears; we shall understand each other, she and I." These words, for all their honeyed sweetness, meant defiance rather than resignation. This Napoleon recognised, but he vouchsafed no comment, simply saying as he left the room, "Well, do as you like."

A few days later he set out for Germany. The campaign was arduous. The Emperor's occupations,

the rapidity of his marches, the check at Essling and the exertions to which he put himself at Löbau to retrieve his position gave him at first no time to make further breaches in the marriage bond and so pave the way for the divorce which, since the conference at Erfurt, he had determined to bring about. But after his entry into Vienna matters took a different turn. He established himself at the Castle of Schoenbrunn, and one of his first acts was to send for Madame Walewska. He took a delightful villa for her about half-way between Vienna and Schoenbrunn. Absence and other *liaisons* had in no degree diminished Napoleon's affection for the beautiful Pole, and his mistress came back to him with all the charm of novelty. Every evening Constant mysteriously drove away from the castle in an ordinary-looking closed carriage, which had no coat-of-arms upon it, and went to Madame Walewska's villa. He brought her back to the Emperor, conducted her to his room, and next morning reconducted her to her villa. Such daily goings and comings could scarcely have been very agreeable to Madame Walewska, but since she submitted to them it must have been that either her fortune or her heart was the gainer. This continued during the three months the Emperor spent at Schoenbrunn.

Madame Walewska soon became *enceinte*, and the Emperor was hugely delighted to know that he was shortly to have another little bastard to his name.

He was therefore not impotent, as he had feared for so long and as Josephine and Madame Fourès had tried to make him believe. Since the birth of little Léon, the son of the Grand Duchess of Berg's reader, he had

scarcely had any misgivings on the point, but Madame Walewska's condition placed the matter beyond all doubt. Henceforth his mind was made up on the question of an early divorce. Was it not his duty to consolidate the institutions which he had given to France—France which he had restored from the ruins of her former self, which he had welded together by his own efforts, which was his own handiwork, and which stands even at this day on foundations of his laying? Since he had the power of begetting children, his destiny and his duty alike ordained that he should found a legitimate line, who should be indissolubly united with the result of his toil and be its guardians in generations to come. Such were the far-reaching consequences of a circumstance so trivial and commonplace in itself as the illicit pregnancy of a woman who accompanied him on his campaigns.

The Emperor now redoubled his attentions and solicitude for his mistress. But when he prepared to return to France, the Peace with Austria having at length been concluded, he did not, as Constant and Madame de Rémusat affirm, arrange for her to come to Paris. She went back to Poland, and there, at the Château de Walewitz, on the 4th May 1810, was born the future Comte Walewski, President of the Legislative Body in the reign of Napoleon III.

When, her confinement over, Madame Walewska came to Paris with her son, the Emperor, according to Constant, availed himself of the services of the Grand Marshal Duroc to negotiate the purchase of a pretty house in the Chaussée d'Antin. This house, like that which he had given Eléonore de la Plaigne, little

Léon's mother, was situated in the Rue de la Victoire. It was in the same street, formerly known as the Rue Chantereine, that he had made love to Josephine, and it was there that he installed his latest love.

Madame Walewska was glad to be in Paris. "All my thoughts," she told Constant one day when speaking of the Emperor, "all my inspirations come from him and return to him. He is my all, my life, my hope!" Her only reason for showing herself so friendly and confiding was that she desired her statements to be repeated to the Emperor, and Constant, equally well disposed towards them both, did not neglect her wishes.

> "She rarely left her house save to visit the private apartments at the Tuileries. When this was not permitted her she never sought amusement at the theatre or in society. She stayed at home, saw very few people, and wrote every day to the Emperor. Her son was brought up at home and she never left him. She frequently took him to the Château, where I used to admit them by the black staircase. When either one of them was ill the Emperor used to send M. Corvisart to them, and on one occasion that skilful practician had the good fortune to pull the young Count through a dangerous illness.
>
> "Madame Walewska had had a gold ring made for the Emperor with some of her beautiful fair hair in it. Inside the ring were engraved the following words: 'When thou shalt cease to love me forget not that I love thee still.' The Emperor never used to call her anything but Marie."[1]

It was perhaps for this reason that when he married Marie Louise he always called her Louise.

[1] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 347.

The Empress Josephine, who had learned in 1807 of the Emperor's *liaison* in Poland, soon became aware of the arrival of Madame Walewska and her son in Paris in 1810. Although the divorce had then severed her from Bonaparte, she conceived the extraordinary idea of making the acquaintance of her husband's mistress, and sent her an invitation to La Malmaison. Such a proceeding scarcely betokens any pride or dignity of sentiment, but those were qualities to which she could never lay any claim. Moreover, she always displayed a predilection for women whose conduct or position was irregular. Did she not, for example, make friends with her former rivals, Mesdames Duchâtel and Gazzani? She treated Madame Walewska with great and undisguised consideration—one may well ask why—and heaped presents on her and her son. All this had a bad effect, and the people at Court took advantage of this public example to justify their own irregularities to themselves and to the world at large.

The accounts of the celebrated costumier Leroy which have been recently published,[1] show that though Madame Walewska lived in semi-privacy she was surrounded by every luxury. We may mention, among other things, her handkerchiefs at ninety-six francs apiece (this was in 1815, when the Emperor was a prisoner on the Isle of Elba), a costume of white tulle and a gown adorned with three floral wreaths, costing nine hundred and thirty francs, coats, dressing-gowns, etc., all in keeping. She spent more on dress than the Emperor's sisters, who never enjoyed a reputation for self-denial on this score or on any other. But then

[1] Henri Bouchot, *La toilette à la cour de Napoléon.*

she had to dress well in order to please the Emperor, and that she succeeded in her object is proved by the fact that she was able to live on such a lavish scale.

If it gave the Emperor pleasure at Schoenbrunn to know that Madame Walewska was *enceinte*, her condition involved his leaving her to some extent to herself. She required nursing; he required amusing, and so he gave himself up to fresh gallantries. "He had no lack of opportunity," remarks Constant.

He went one day on a visit to Vienna, and was taking a stroll in the Prater with Duroc, a few officers only being in attendance, when he happened to pass a group of ladies, one of whom cried out as soon as she caught sight of him, "Look, there he is!" The Emperor heard her, stopped short and bowed smilingly to the fair saunterers. The one who had spoken turned as red as a cherry. The Emperor, guessing that she was the culprit, gazed at her for a long time with that soft caressing expression which he knew so well how to assume, turned to look after her again and seemed to pass on sorely against his will. He spoke of her to Duroc, and the latter, who was as eager to serve his master in matters of gallantry as in the details of the management of the Tuileries, lost no time in sending one of his officers to make enquiries. He soon returned with the information that the lady in question was the widow of one of the wealthiest merchants in Vienna, and gave him her name and address, which he had been clever enough to discover.

Probably Duroc himself conducted the negotiations with her and presented his master's compliments and acquainted her with his desires. Success came

promptly, and relations were established between the Conqueror of Austria and the widow of the Austrian merchant. It seems that the young coquette quickly forgot the sufferings and misfortunes of her unhappy country for the foolish vanity of seeing herself enrolled in the battalion of women who were employed "to amuse the unamusable," and perhaps of boasting of her position. In spite of that her name remains unknown to us. All that can be recorded of her is that "Madame ——, in order not to be separated from the Conqueror of whom she had just made a conquest, accompanied the army into Bavaria and afterwards came to live in Paris, where she died in 1812."[1]

On another occasion as he was strolling in the neighbourhood of Schoenbrunn the Emperor noticed a charming and distinguished-looking girl pass by. Napoleon, after the manner of the Khalif Haroun al-Raschid and his faithful Mesrour, immediately commanded Duroc to find out her name and address and arrange without any further preliminaries a meeting next night at the castle.

The Emperor was growing decidedly fickle, but still he had an excuse. The ladies of Vienna were so pretty, and after all, in desiring to make a conquest of this latest one he was only breaking faith with three or four others: with the merchant's widow who, if she had been unfaithful to her husband's memory, had been equally so to her unhappy country; with Madame Walewska, but then what grounds had she for complaint, for had she not betrayed her own husband; and

[1] Constant, *Mémoires*; Vol. III, p. 120.

finally with Josephine, but in her case the matter was of less consequence, seeing that she was his lawful wife.

In irregular unions it would have been out of place to look for mutual fidelity. The marriage bond once broken, subsequent breaches of faith are of no account. A man would have to be a triple fool to take them seriously. All that either party has to do is to play his or her part in the Comedy of Love, until he or she, wearying of the partnership, begins a new comedy on a new stage. It is pleasure that brings them together, and the pleasure of chasing a new pleasure that tears them apart. This at any rate was Napoleon's view of the matter and Madame Walewska's also, and both obtained from the bargain that which their respective aims required. Napoleon was paid in Love's coinage, his mistress in more tangible advantages. To such an extent indeed was this a true statement of the case that after 1816, when her lover had set out for St. Helena and her husband for another world, she determined on seeking further distractions in a fresh marriage and wedded the Comte Philippe Antoine d'Ornano. All this shows how little love had to do with the matter, in spite of the ring she gave her lover with its motto "When thou shalt cease to love me, forget not that I love thee still."

To return to the young girl whom the Emperor happened to encounter one morning in the circumstances we have related. She welcomed with enthusiasm the idea of being presented to the marvellous man at whose name all Europe trembled. History makes no mention of the terms in which the Emperor's proposal

was conveyed to her, nor are we told whether she asked her parents' advice before accepting. All we know is that she went. The whole affair was horribly discreditable. Brought by the officer who had gone in search of her—this was no doubt Duroc, of whose duties such missions formed an important part—she was shown into the Emperor's room by Constant. Napoleon was expecting her. He addressed her in French, but she replied in Italian that she did not know French. They therefore spoke Italian. Napoleon learnt, with no little surprise, that she belonged to a very good family, and that, though inclined to be romantic, her character was irreproachable. A desire to see the great soldier who was to be so famous in history, united with the truly feminine attribute of curiosity, had alone prompted her to agree to the rendezvous. She spoke with such great frankness and such absolute ingenuousness that the Emperor, perceiving that he had to do with an inquisitive girl and not a shameless wanton, talked to her with paternal kindliness, took great pleasure in the conversation, and finally sent her home to her father and mother. This romantic young lady had nothing to complain of in the way she was treated by the Emperor, who sent her his compliments next day together with a considerable sum of money, which he said would be her dowry for her wedding-day.

This is an incident which easily tends to make one forget the vulgar peccadillos which strike one as so amazing in a man of his immense genius. But may we not apply to Napoleon more fittingly than to anyone else the words of Bossuet, who said: "God only bestows these great gifts on a man for the service of

others, often leaving him to whom He has given them to grope his own way amid the shadows"?

On his return to France Napoleon, as we are aware, kept Josephine as far as possible at arm's length. He had resolved to set her aside, but lacked the courage to declare his decision.[1] At length he finally made up his mind. Although the position was a painful one for him—perhaps even because it was a painful one—he once more sought distraction in affairs of gallantry. It has been alleged that he became, not for the first time, the lover of his own sister Pauline. We have proved elsewhere the falseness of this accusation.[2] Though it is true that at the time in question the Emperor had taken a fancy to a woman, the woman was not Pauline, but Madame de Mathis, a lady of her household. She was rather pretty, but in detail as it were and not as a whole. She possessed a bust of extraordinary length and legs as short as a little girl's, while her head was too big for her body. However, she had a wealth of wonderful fair hair. Madame de Mathis made a prolonged resistance ere she consented to receive her Sovereign's attentions, but Princess Pauline gave her a sound rating, telling her that it was wrong to oppose the Emperor's wishes. So effective were her lectures that at last she gained her brother's cause. The fair one, whose only wish was doubtless to put a higher value on her charms by a little display of coquetry, yielded at length. Just imagine if, tired of waiting, the Emperor had bestowed his affections on another!

At the Court the Emperor's latest caprice soon

[1] See *L'Impératrice Joséphine*, p. 155 *et seq.*
[2] *Les sœurs de Napoléon*, p. 205.

became known. "One of those court-ferrets who unearth anything with a scandal attached to it," says Stanislas Girardin, "tells me about a new La Vallière who has attracted the Emperor's attention. She is an Italian attached to the household of the Princess Borghese and is, I have been told, of fair complexion, as round as a ball and only less fresh than a rose. Like Louis XIV, her lover comes to her through a skylight, and the Princess, like a dutiful little sister, introduces His Royal and Imperial Majesty." [1]

The caprice for the "little ball" did not last long. Public matters soon put an end to it. The decree of divorce was pronounced on the 15th December, and if the Emperor had lived what they call *la vie de jeune homme* since his return from Egypt, his behaviour during the period which intervened between the divorce and his second marriage was exemplary. Was he not bound to display before the world a little mourning for the Empress he had put away, while to the future Empress, whoever she might be, was he not equally bound to show himself a man of character?

Such, however, was hardly his reputation in the Paris salons. His flightiness had been seen so often; and even now was he not putting appearances against him? It was indeed being whispered that he had made a conquest of the Princess de Carignan, that reckless, brave little woman whose conduct at Turin in 1798 had gained her the applause of the whole citizen-army. It was said that it was simply on account of the fancy he had taken to her that her son

[1] Stanislas Girardin, *Journal et Souvenirs*, Vol. II; p. 339, 12th November 1809. Maréchal de Castellane, *Journal*, Vol. I, p. 85.

Prince Albert received from the Emperor an income of one hundred thousand francs a year in compensation for his confiscated property, together with the title of Count which he did not ask for, and a lieutenancy which he would have gladly done without. But this time the gossips were at fault, and Monsieur Costa de Beauregard, who quotes them, is in error when he states that Napoleon had met the Princess de Carignan at Madame de Rémusat's.[1] Napoleon was not in the habit of paying visits, and Monsieur Paul de Rémusat, the grandson of Josephine's distinguished lady-in-waiting, has himself assured us that the Emperor never set foot within her house.

[1] Marquis Costa de Beauregard, *La jeunesse du roi Charles Albert*, p. 12.

CHAPTER X

Napoleon's second marriage—The Emperor's love for Marie Louise—His delicate attentions towards her—His amorous enthusiasm a trifle childish—A problem in etiquette—Marie Louise's suave indifference—Napoleon's confidence in his wife—Sovereigns the slaves of etiquette—Return from Russia; a baseless story—The Empress's indifference towards the Emperor—Napoleon on the Island of Elba—Marie Louise does not reply to his letters—Madame Walewska on the Island of Elba—Love affairs—Waterloo—Hortense's kindness—The Memorial of Sir Hudson Lowe and Napoleon's love-affairs at Saint Helena—Napoleon's blind faith in the good qualities of Marie Louise—A special clause in Napoleon's will.

WE have described in another volume the love scenes that marked the final leave-taking of the two parties to the divorce: their farewell kiss and all the melodramatic exaggerations with which they thought fit to invest the great event. Nor is this the place for us to recount the story of the second marriage which considerations of policy induced Napoleon to contract. Our sole concern is to depict the state of mind of that mighty genius, now at the pinnacle of his greatness, in a crisis unique in the history of nations.

The Emperor's pride was immensely flattered by this match. Just as on the day of his coronation he exclaimed to his brother: "Joseph, if only our father could see us!" so now he must have bethought himself of those hardships of his childhood's days when comfort was a stranger in his father's home; he must have

remembered his poverty at the École Militaire, the gibes of his merciless companions, his wounded pride, and the privations he nobly endured in order that he might set aside some of his meagre pay to help his mother and sisters in their distress. Although he had attained the most transcendent heights of fortune, although he had gathered crowns at the sword's point as a skilful horseman picks up rings at the gallop, although he himself was a very monument of genius, he was flattered at the thought of allying himself with a Princess of the most ancient Royal House in Europe. Love with him was always mingled with vanity. Had he not felt flattered in 1796 when he wedded the Vicomtesse de Beauharnais? Marmont indeed affirms that he displayed a deeper pride on that occasion than when in after years he wedded the Archduchess. It is true that he ascribed to Madame de Beauharnais a far loftier social position than that which she really occupied and that he thought to consolidate his own rank as a General by taking to wife the widow of the late General Beauharnais. Nevertheless there is no doubt that in both alliances pride played an important part. Not that pride is an evil in such cases. There are marriages which would be sorry enough, Heaven knows, if pride did not sit at the board. Pride is perhaps the best part of some unions, for at least it lingers on when all else has departed.

Love is born of contrasts, and when taking stock of the Archduchess's portrait the Emperor, whose complexion was dark and swarthy, observed that Marie Louise was all pink and white and that her figure already displayed considerable embonpoint. She was

quite different from the women of Corsica, who are dark-skinned, spare and black-haired; their hair is so black indeed that even at eighty they rarely show any signs of turning grey. Marie Louise with her fresh complexion was therefore the very woman to captivate Napoleon at first sight, and that was precisely what happened. With his extraordinary genius he united a certain amount of naïveté in his views about women and love. The Emperor had at first fallen in love with Marie Louise purely and simply because she was an Archduchess, and then his affection for her grew stronger because he perceived from her portrait that she was the owner of beautiful fair hair, blue eyes and rosy cheeks. It has been said that it is beside the mark to ask "the why and wherefore" of love. A man falls in love because he does, and no sentiment admits of explanation and analysis in a less degree than love. If, indeed, we could see into our own hearts, if we were honest enough with ourselves to unravel the hidden motives of our passions, we should perhaps be less inclined for love-duets, or at all events display a wiser discrimination in the selection of our partners. But in the case of a man who has not the gift of self-knowledge it is always interesting to trace the motives of his conduct, more particularly in regard to a man like Napoleon, who ought to have shed his illusions about women, seeing the multifarious experience he must have gained in his repeated transgressions of the marriage bond.

His pride, the knowledge that the Archduchess was a beautiful girl, united with the hope of founding a dynasty with the children she would bear him, all com-

bined to plunge him into a state of delicious ecstasy to which he abandoned himself with a thoroughly childish delight.

"You would never believe, my dear father," wrote Jérôme's wife, the Queen of Westphalia, to the King of Würtemberg, "how deeply the Emperor has fallen in love with his future wife. His delight and enthusiasm are greater than I should ever have thought possible, far greater than I can tell you. Every day he despatches to her one of his chamberlains who bears, like Mercury, the missives of Great Jupiter. He has shown me five of these epistles, which it is true would hardly pass for those of St. Paul, but which are really such as a devout lover might have dictated. He talks to me of nothing but her and her affairs. I will not attempt an account of all the fêtes and presents he is preparing for her and of which he has given me the minutest description; I will content myself with giving you an idea of his state of mind by mentioning that he told me that when he is married he will give peace to the world and all his leisure to Zaïre."[1]

And as a matter of fact the Emperor, who had sent the Prince of Wagram to Vienna (in which, by the way, he displayed a want of tact) to make a formal request for the hand of the Archduchess and to marry her by proxy, dictated the following words to his messenger, who faithfully repeated them to the young Princess: "Political considerations may have in-

[1] *Briefwechsel der Königin Katharina mit dem König Friedrich von Würtemberg*, Vol. I, p. 290. A letter quoted by M. Arthur Lévy in his admirable work *Napoléon intime*.



MARIE LOUISE
From a painting by an unknown artist (Gerard?)

fluenced the decision of the two Sovereigns, but it is above all with your heart's consent, Madame, that the Emperor desires to win you."

As the day of his august bride's entry into France drew near, Napoleon became more and more possessed with those feelings of delicious expectancy which have given rise to the saying, in which there is no small measure of truth, that the happiest part of matrimony is the courtship. He could not sit still; he would look at the Archduchess's portrait scores of times in a day. He ordered a suit at Léger's, the fashionable tailor; it was an ornamental affair with a lot of embroidery about it which Pauline, who knew everything about men, their dress included, had advised him to have made. He amused himself by trying it on, and after contemplating the features of the future Empress, he would look at himself in the glass with a sort of complacent air which seemed to say: *Nec sum adeo informis;* well, well, but I'm not so bad-looking after all! Let the man who has not done likewise cast the first stone at him.

He showed himself very thoughtful concerning the feelings of his expected bride, and had all the pictures which recalled the wars with Austria removed from the Gallery of Diana. He took lessons in waltzing, and mopped his brow, for he was getting fat, after doing two or three turns round the room with a chair for partner. In short he was in love, and not by proxy. He put the most minute questions to the officers whom the Prince of Wagram sent every day from Vienna, and who had seen the Archduchess, and even went to the length, great baby that he was, of saying to one of

them: "Has she got plenty of this? . . . And of that? . . . Tell me, tell me everything."[1] Had he changed in the least since the day when he arrived at Nice to assume the command of the army of Italy, and showed Josephine's portrait to his generals, asking them what they thought of her?

Marie Louise was then eighteen years of age, and very generously proportioned. To adopt the Emperor's familiarity of expression, she had plenty "of this" and also "of that"—rather too much, in fact. But despite this embonpoint, which gave her a resemblance to the type of woman one sees in Rubens' pictures, her arms were too thin, and she had no grace of movement. Her complexion was described as pink and white, but one must have been either a courtier or a lover, that is to say, a liar or a blind man, to have given the name pink to the vivid crimson which overspread her cheeks and made her look like a person who was conscious of having said something foolish. It would have been a mistake, however, to entertain such an idea about her, for when she did say a silly thing she invariably failed to perceive it. She was, in a word, a most ordinary sort of woman, with a very doubtful title to be considered good-looking, a mind that was practically dormant and no force of character at all. If Napoleon had not fallen in love with her in advance on account of her title and her pink cheeks as idealised by some chivalrous artist, he would never have thought of taking a fancy to a person of such insignificant attractions, surrounded as he was by a bevy of women so justly renowned for their beauty.

[1] Général Lejeune, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 30.

Yes, he was in love, and very much in love. But he had to adjust his ardour to the exigencies of etiquette, and never were there two things less capable of adjustment. How should anything so elemental, so natural and so spontaneous as love accommodate itself to restraints expressly designed to hold it in check?

Napoleon drew up a whole code of ceremonies to which he intended to submit in company with the rest, but when the time came to carry them out it was quite another matter. The lover ousted the Emperor, and rode rough-shod over the ceremonial arrangements, which were o :the most complicated nature, and had necessitated the collaboration of the Austrian Ambassador. How singular it is that an event which, apart from externals, is common alike to the palace of the rich and the cottage of the poor, should have been hedged about with so many formalities. Nor was the spectacle of the Lord of Europe engaged in solemn discussion regarding the manner of bestowing the first kiss on his bride the least amazing circumstance in a period so prolific of strange events. However, he himself gave proof of the absurdity of the arrangements by setting them at nought when the moment came for him to play his part.

Ever since Marie Louise had granted him her hand Napoleon had not allowed a day to pass without writing to her. It was so arranged that a page arrived from Paris every morning bearing a letter from the Emperor. The Archduchess would write her reply with the assistance of the Queen of Naples, her future sister-in-law, and then another page would immediately take horse to carry it post-haste to the Emperor.

It is stated that Marie Louise took the greatest pleasure in this correspondence, and impatiently awaited her fiancé's letters.[1] Possibly she did. But sufficient importance has not been given to the boyish delight with which Napoleon greeted the letters of the Archduchess. One might have taken him for a youngster with all the bright illusions of his twenty years about him receiving for the first time in his life a letter from a woman. All his bygone gallantries seemed to have been swept clean away. In the new Bonaparte one would never have recognised the man who had almost made it his business to play the cynical and sensual libertine, and had written to his brother Jérôme, who copied him only in his vices, saying, "Do as I do, remain only half an hour at table, avail yourself of any women that come your way, but never keep mistresses." He had undergone a complete transformation and made no affectation of concealing his honest feelings. How his heart began to beat when he thought of the approaching arrival of "his" Louise! "He was often heard cursing the ceremony and the fêtes which delayed the longed-for meeting at Soissons, where a camp had been formed for the reception of the Empress."[2]

The Emperor left Compiègne to meet Marie Louise with every intention of observing the formalities which he had himself prescribed, but he grew impatient with all the ceremonial, and when he learned that his fiancée was not more than a dozen leagues away he got into a carriage with the King of Naples and drove

[1] Madame la Générale Durand, *Mémoires*, p. 39.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

off to meet her without escort. He encountered her cortège at Courcelles, and he then alighted and approached the Archduchess's carriage. The equerry threw open the door and cried, "The Emperor!"

Like a true lover, Napoleon rather threw himself into it than entered it, and his young fiancée was somewhat taken aback at seeing him thus set etiquette at defiance. She was to be still more disconcerted before the day was over. No sooner was the door shut than the carriage, in accordance with the Emperor's instructions, drove off rapidly towards Compiègne, thus unceremoniously setting aside all the arrangements he himself had so carefully prepared.

Compiègne was reached at ten o'clock at night, when the Sovereigns took supper, the King and Queen of Naples being of the party. Still rendered oblivious of etiquette by the blooming cheeks of Marie Louise, the Emperor with the impatience of a sub-lieutenant beseeched his blushing Empress in language but half disguised, which he emphasised by glances as urgent as they were tender, to suffer him to depart from the programme and spare him the vexatious necessity of going back after supper to sleep at his own quarters. He would be so much better off where he was; surely she might have a little compassion on him. The Queen of Naples always took her brother's part in such matters and did her utmost to persuade the Empress not to show herself recalcitrant, but as the latter seemed a little perplexed, not perhaps quite realising what was being asked of her, the Emperor in order to banish her scruples brought his heavy artillery into action. "'Is it not true, Monsieur le Cardinal,' said

he to his Uncle Fesch, 'that we are really and truly married?' 'Certainly, Sire, according to civil law,' answered the Cardinal, never for a moment dreaming of the consequences his answer was to entail."[1]

In face of the reply thus given by the unsuspecting Cardinal, Marie Louise had no alternative but to obey her husband, and thus it was that the final stipulation of the Protocol was evaded. Next day as he was dressing the Emperor enquired of his valet whether the public had noticed the liberty they had taken with the programme.[2]

If Napoleon had fallen in love with Marie Louise merely from seeing her likeness, he grew more deeply attached to her than ever when he had become completely acquainted with the original. Not a day went by but he discovered in his wife some fresh merit, some unexpected good quality. As he gazed upon her ruddy cheeks there visited him once more those illusions and enthusiasms that had been his in the far-off days in Italy when Josephine was at his side. Despite his devotion to work and affairs of State he sacrificed everything to his young wife, and lay, as it were, at her feet after the manner of a faithful hound. He used to go into her room while she was dressing and amuse himself by teasing her, playfully pinching her on the cheek, the neck and so forth. Then Marie Louise would get angry, but not very seriously, whereupon her husband would take her in his arms, smother her with kisses and call her his *grosse bête*, and, as soon as he had soothed her, begin

[1] Baron Peyrusse, *Mémorial*, p. 62.
[2] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 225.

his tricks again. At other times he would play the Emperor, mount the high horse and start a very stately discourse on a very trivial subject. He would begin to talk perhaps of the ladies of his Court and of the dignity he liked to see them maintain, and it was to Marie Louise that he said one day: "Chastity in a woman is what courage is in a man. I scorn a coward and an immodest woman."

It was well said, but at that rate few women of his Court would have been entitled to anything but his scorn. And so one wonders how he managed to deliver himself of such a sententious remark without laughing. So great, however, is a pure woman's influence over her husband that in her society he soon forgets every fickle and unworthy notion, and has no thought but of living wholly for her and her happiness. Napoleon did not differ from other men, and he surrendered himself with delight to the charm of Marie Louise's girlish innocence. Indeed, it was a totally new experience for him, for with Josephine, well . . .

This second marriage had undoubtedly put an end to the free and easy life he had led during the first. The Court people were amazed to see him so changed. The frail ladies of yesterday "put their eyes in their pockets," as the French saying goes, while his former boon companions adopted an attitude of prudent reserve, in the hope that things would not go on so for ever, and that the Emperor would soon begin his old pranks again. There were others, however, who were genuinely glad at seeing him become such a good husband and, had it not been for the awe with

which he inspired them, they would have complimented him to his face.

"It would be a vain endeavour," wrote Cardinal Maury to the wife of a prominent General, "to attempt to convey to your mind how fond the Emperor is of our charming Empress. It is love indeed, but love of the right stamp this time. Yes, he is in love, in a way that he never was with Josephine, who after all was no longer young when he knew her. She was over thirty at the time of their marriage, whereas this girl is as young and fresh as the springtide. You will see her, and you will be enraptured with her."[1]

Meanwhile the Cardinal was himself enraptured with her, and though in ecclesiastical affairs his judgment may have been faulty, in mundane matters he was not without experience, and he had read the Emperor's heart correctly.

What then, it will be inquired, had Marie Louise at her command to keep this gad-about at home. To tell the truth, her possessions were nothing very startling. To begin with, she had neither heart nor mind, disabilities which, curiously enough, men find rather to their taste. The next item in the inventory was more encouraging, to wit a fair young body. And that was all.

She gave herself up to the pleasure of being adored by her husband, while he, good man, because she let him worry her with his attentions without a pout and went through all the weary business of Court functions without a murmur, believed that she really loved him. As a matter of fact her heart was never engaged at all.

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. VIII, p. 212.

Coming back on one occasion, tired out after a day's shooting, he sent a message to Marie Louise begging her to come and see him. Meek as ever, she obeyed the summons. As soon as she entered the room he hurried towards her and clasping her in his arms gave her a great kiss on the cheek, when what did she do but bring out her handkerchief and proceed to wipe her cheek. "What! are you getting disgusted with me?" asked the Emperor. "Oh no, it's just a habit of mine," she replied. The habit and the answer seemed little to his taste. Nor did his displeasure by any means diminish when having asked her to sleep in his room she said, "Oh, it's too hot there." The Emperor, as everyone knows, liked to keep his rooms very warm, but unfortunately excessive heat had the effect of changing his Consort's roses into peonies. She therefore preferred to remain in her own room without a fire to running the risk of appearing at a disadvantage. Now a man that is in love has wonderful powers of vision, and though he can often see love in the indifference, nay, even in the very unkindnesses of his inamorata, we may reasonably express a little doubt as to whether this refusal on the part of Marie Louise gave much pleasure to her husband.

But to give her her due she loved him as well as her poverty of heart allowed her to love anyone, and she blazoned her happiness far and wide. "Heaven," she wrote a month after she arrived at Compiègne, "Heaven has answered the prayers you uttered on my wedding-day. May it soon be yours to be as happy as I am now."[1] Time and again, in a host of other

[1] *Correspondance de Marie Louise*, p. 146.

letters, she harps on the same theme—her own happiness, the Emperor's kindness, his thoughtful attentions, emphatically declaring that she could not be happy without him. Doubtless it was not winter and there were no huge fires in his rooms when she wrote in that strain. Sometimes in one of those glowing moments of enthusiasm which usually followed any satisfaction his wife vouchsafed him, the Emperor would exclaim: "If the people of France only realised what a good woman she is they would cast themselves on their knees before her."[1] This was taking a lover's view of things with a vengeance, for apart from a certain unprotesting submissiveness, the result of indifference rather than of affection, Marie Louise had but one strong point and that was the singular—but very useless—faculty of making her ears twitch,[2] an accomplishment she was fond of displaying to her ladies. That was no very startling feat after all, and not so attractive as to have given Napoleon grounds for jealousy, though jealous some people have alleged that he was. The truth of the matter is that he remembered Josephine's little "inconsequences," and being unwilling to run similar risks with this other thoughtless young lady he gave orders "that no man was to be allowed into her apartments. There was one exception and that was in favour of Paër her music-master, but even in his case a lady-in-waiting or a *dame d'annonce* had to be on the watch all the time the lesson lasted."[3]

[1] Chaptal, *Mes souvenirs sur Napoléon*, p. 351.
[2] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. VIII, p. 213.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 214.

But one day Napoleon went in and found a man there and great was his indignation. It was not jealousy that made him furious, but the thought that his orders had been defied. It was in vain that the lady-in-waiting hastened to tell him that it was only Biennais, who had come to explain the secret of some little piece of furniture he had been making for the Empress. The Emperor replied with a frown: "Never mind who he is, he is a man, and I will not have any exceptions made to my rule or else it will soon be good-bye to the rule."

In this there was no jealousy. He was merely taking simple common-sense precautions to prevent the youthful Sovereign compromising the dignity of her rank by any piece of thoughtless behaviour. The following story told by the Prince von Metternich disposes of the idea that there was any jealousy in his love for his wife.

"I found Napoleon and the Empress alone," he said. "We began talking about anything and nothing when all at once Napoleon turned to me and said: 'I want the Empress to have a little free and open conversation with you and to tell you from her heart how she likes her position. You are a friend, therefore she should have nothing to conceal from you.' With these words Napoleon shut the door of the salon, put the key in his pocket and went out by another exit. I turned to the Empress and enquired what it meant, but she was just as much at a loss as I was. Seeing therefore that the affair had not been prearranged I suggested that the Emperor doubtless wished me to gather from her own lips a thorough idea of her domestic relations so as to be able to report favourably upon them to the Emperor her father, and she agreed that this was probably the

case. We had been shut up together for nearly an hour when the Emperor came in and said with a laugh: 'Well, have you had a good talk? Has the Empress said anything about me? Has she laughed or cried? But never mind, I don't wish you to tell me. These matters are secrets between the pair of you and don't concern a third party, even when he happens to be the husband.' Next day Napoleon sought an opportunity of engaging me in conversation. 'Well, what did the Empress say to you yesterday?' he asked. 'You said,' I began, 'that the matter did not concern any third party; allow me then to keep the secret.' 'The Empress must have told you that she is happy with me,' he broke in, 'and that she has nothing to complain of. I trust you will tell your Emperor so and that your testimony will convince him.'"[1]

Napoleon therefore, it is clear, did his utmost to ensure the happiness of his beloved Marie Louise, and, more than that, he was anxious that her father and everyone else should know it. With that object in view he had no hesitation in closeting her for a whole hour with Prince von Metternich, in order that she might make her confession and his own without let or hindrance. With Josephine such a proceeding would have been scarcely prudent, for Barras has told us that she could not be trusted in a carriage alone with a man without throwing her arms about his neck, while Madame d'Abrantès too has stated that her husband had found himself much in the same position with Josephine as Joseph with Potiphar's wife. But Napoleon, like every other lover, had absolute faith in the woman he adored, for he knew that von Metternich,

[1] Metternich, *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 105.

who was a fine, handsome, distinguished-looking man, was rightly credited with playing havoc with the hearts of the ladies at Court.

Unhampered, then, by any sort of anxiety, Napoleon devoted himself to his fair and buxom young wife. She understood him no better than Josephine had done, but she was meek and gentle and this made Napoleon believe that he was loved. It was an illusion, but what are illusions but the very current coin of love? They evoke it, they keep it alive. After all, better an illusion or two sometimes than dull cold reality! Still, Napoleon's love dream was very bourgeois in character. He might have been as ardently in love as a subaltern; but his love was not of the kind that pines for solitude, that delights in wandering hand-in-hand with the beloved one in the woodlands or by the margin of some lonely stream. Her name was not found graven on the bark of birch and plane trees as well as on his own heart. This time he had done with Romance. No passion-breathing letters such as those he wrote to Josephine; above all not a line of poetry. He did not seek from her, as he did in Italy, a magnificent outburst of passion of which he should be the cause and the object. No, what he needed now was a restful, quiet little love, very gentle and very homely, and without any scenes. Oh, to think of Josephine and her scenes, what a nightmare! In a word, his desire was for a "fireside and slippers" sort of love that would be waiting to welcome him every evening and soothe him and restore him after the day's work was done. Such was his loftiest dream of bliss. The good bourgeois heart which throbbed within the breast of the peerless

Lord of War would gladly have renounced—more gladly than one would think perhaps—a few of his splendours if only some of the joys that he felt might have been experienced by her who inspired them.[1] Sometimes he would be found seated at his desk toying with the Empress's dainty glove. He would gaze at it long and tenderly, kissing it and drinking in its subtle perfume. Love made it in his eyes the symbol of a long succession of human perfections and divine delights. Whoso came to beg a favour of him at such moments had it granted on the spot. Genuine love, as we all know, renders a man good-natured and well-disposed to all about him. If, on the other hand, a man is restless, irritable and splenetic, we may be sure that it is love, or rather the woman on whom he has bestowed his love, that is making him unhappy. Such is the real reason of harshness in so many men.

But his duties, and still more the restrictions of etiquette, forbade him to give free and unfettered play to the promptings of his heart. It was a strange irony that all those trammels of etiquette and ceremony which he had forged for others should have held him more relentlessly in thrall than any of his subjects. Betwixt him and his wife there ever intervened a third party. For them there were no dainty little soirées *à deux ou à quatre*, no fireside chats prolonged far into the night, no lingering in the bed's cosy warmth of a morning, no sauntering about Paris where every step brings a fresh wonder to view, no long rambles in the

[1] "The only mistake I made in that marriage was in bringing to it affections of too homely a character."—*Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, Vol. II, p. 661.

country. As he often said himself, he was the victim of "the nature of things," but in his private as well as in his public life it was he himself and none other who was responsible for "the nature of things" being what it was.

Seeing how his unwillingness to leave his wife caused him to neglect the war in Spain, one might have thought that Europe was about to enjoy peace at last, and it was with the idea of ensuring peace that he entered upon the war with Russia. But alas! a few more degrees of cold than he had counted on upset all his calculations, and the appalling consequences of that gigantic expedition are but too well known. All through the campaign Napoleon was thoroughly loyal to his wife, though, truth to tell, there was no particular merit in that. There were no opportunities for being anything else, and besides, a man who had witnessed the awful sights which he described in the 29th bulletin of tragic memory, would scarcely have felt inclined for amusement. True, in 1807, after the battle of Eylau, he had not shown himself indifferent to pleasure. But now the circumstances did not conduce to trifling, and the famous message to Constant, dated Mainz, 14th December, in which he is reported to have written: "A bath, supper and Walewska,"[1] is undoubtedly apocryphal. Constant had been left behind at Smorgoni in Russia, and did not reach Paris till six or eight days after the Emperor.[2] Moreover, this is what Méneval has to say on the matter:—

[1] Th. Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 170; Ch. Nauroy, *Les secrets des Bonaparte*, p. 236.

[2] Constant, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 473.

"The Emperor arrived at the Tuileries very late on the 18th (December). The Empress, who was feeling ill and depressed, had just retired to rest, for Napoleon had not sent her word of his coming. Disturbed at a commotion in the salon which adjoined her bedroom, Marie Louise got up to see what was amiss, when the Emperor entered and rushing forward clasped her in his arms. The noise which had alarmed her arose from an altercation which had been taking place between the lady-in-waiting and two men wearing fur cloaks and hoods. The lady had been rightfully attempting to bar their passage into her mistress's apartment when one of them, drawing aside his cloak, revealed the Emperor to her astonished gaze."[1]

This twofold testimony conclusively proves first that the Emperor never wrote the oft-quoted note, and secondly, that he went to the Empress's apartments just as he was, in his travelling garb, the moment he arrived at the Tuileries. The evidence is perfectly trustworthy and much more in keeping with the Emperor's habits since his marriage to Marie Louise than the note with which he has been credited. We may ask ourselves, moreover, whether, in a communication addressed to a domestic, he would have referred to a woman he loved simply as "Walewska," and whether there was not always something ready for supper at the Tuileries.

So far was he from thinking of resuming the relations with Madame Walewska, which had been cut short in 1810 by his marriage, that immediately on his return he devoted all his energies to the task of creating a new army, working on an average eighteen

[1] Méneval, *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 102.

hours a day. As may easily be imagined, he had little leisure to think about mistresses when toiling at such superhuman pressure. Mistresses, in fact, did not occupy his mind at all, and if he managed to steal a few moments now and again it was with Marie Louise that he spent them, seeking recreation and repose in the society of his wife and son.

At length he set out on the glorious but disastrous campaign of 1813. If his genius at this time seemed under a cloud, his love for Marie Louse was as whole-hearted as ever. He endeavoured to keep her in ignorance of the troubles which weighed upon his mind, and wrote to Cambacérès as follows: "Ministers must not speak to the Empress of anything which may cause her anxiety or pain."[1] But was Marie Louise worthy of such thoughtful affection? Alas, she ate, drank and slept, and never troubled her head about anything else. Victories, the quarrel between her father and her husband, treasons and defeats all succeeded one another without disturbing her the least in the world. All ceremony, stiffness and etiquette, she only allowed the Duchesse de Montebello to approach her. She would have lunch, nod to her son, take a ride on horseback, work at her tapestry frame, eat cream, play the piano more or less indifferently and gossip in very unroyal fashion about our private affairs; that is how she occupied her time after the events at Dresden.[2] Never had the horizon appeared

[1] *Correspondance de Napoleon 1er*, Vol. XXV, p. 232, pièce 19910. To Prince Cambacérès, High Chancellor of the Empire; Erfurt, 26th April 1813.

[2] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, Vol. IX, p. 28.

so dark with threatening clouds, yet this was the woman he had appointed Regent of France! This was the woman of his heart!

Disaster follows on disaster and France is invaded. Napoleon recovers himself and his genius reappears. He disputes every inch of ground with the invaders and by some of his most brilliant pieces of generalship—but alas! with forces too weak in numbers and experience—endeavours to defend his country's sacred soil. Just as he had snatched an hour between two victories to write to Josephine, so now amid all his anguish he finds time to think of Marie Louise. He writes from Nogent on the 7th February, 1814: "Keep up the Empress's spirits; she is dying of consumption."[1] As a matter of fact the fat German had no thoughts of being carried off by consumption. If there had been any question of her death at this time indigestion would have been far more to be feared than consumption.

At length the Empire crumbles into dust; the Colossus is overthrown. While Napoleon is debating at Fontainebleau whether he shall attempt an attack on Paris, while in despair he attempts to poison himself, what is his wife thinking about—this Empress who sees her throne giving way beneath her? What, we ask! Why, about a silly piece of coquetry. Monsieur de Saint-Aulaire being ushered into her presence one morning at Blois found her in bed with her naked feet protruding beyond the bed-clothes. He had come

[1] *Correspondance de Napoléon 1er*, Vol. XXVII, p. 128, pièce 21,205. To King Joseph in Paris.

to break the terrible news of the Emperor's abdication and of his attempted suicide.

As he related these terrible events he kept his eyes lowered so as not to appear to notice their effect on her countenance. "Ah," said she, "you are observing my feet. People have always told me they are pretty."[1]

The news that she had lost her crown and had come within an ace of losing her husband—and what a husband!—had no deeper effect on her than that. At that very moment her husband, still rigid from the touch of death that had essayed to cut him down ere his due time, was saying, "On Elba I can yet be happy with my wife and child."[2]

What an immeasurable difference between the hearts of husband and wife!

No sooner had he set foot on his island than his thoughts flew to Marie Louise. He did not doubt that she would come to join him. How often had he not said, "A good wife should go whithersoever her husband goes; it is the law of the Gospel." And was not Marie Louise a good wife in his eyes? Apartments were made ready for her, the ceiling of her salon was adorned, after an idea of his own, with a design representing a pair of doves attached to each other by a lover's knot which draws the closer as they fly apart. While the preparations were in progress he wrote to tell her that everything would be in readiness for her when she arrived. Receiving no answer, he concluded that the Allies or the Bourbons were intercepting his letters. He wrote again, and still there was no reply.

[1] D'Haussonville, *Ma jeunesse*, p. 82.
[2] Duc de Vicence, *Souvenirs*, Vol. I, p. 120.

Then he became anxious and despatched special messengers, as we learn from the following letter which he wrote to General Bertrand on the 9th August:—

> "Colonel Leczinski, who leaves at two o'clock to-day for Leghorn, will proceed thence to Aix, whither he will convey a letter from me to the Empress. Write Méneval and let him know that I am expecting the Empress at the end of August, that I wish her to bring my son and that it is odd that I do not hear from her, owing, no doubt, to the letters being kept back."[1]

Alas, August comes and goes, but Napoleon's illusions go not with it. He continues, as his *Correspondance* shows,[2] to avail himself of every opportunity for forwarding letters to his wife. He imagines she must be her father's prisoner, or at least subjected to a very strict surveillance, and uses every means in his power to correspond with her; he even goes the length of writing to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, her uncle, and eats humble-pie—he, the mighty Napoleon—in order to enlist his interest. He asks favours. "I beg your Royal Highness," says he, "to let me know whether I may send you every week a letter for the Empress, and whether you will send me news of her in return and the letters of Madame de Montesquiou, my son's governess. I flatter myself that, notwithstanding the changes that events have wrought in so many, Your Royal Highness still retains some affection for me,

[1] *Correspondance de Napoléon 1er.* Vol. XXVII, p. 408, pièce 21,604. To General Bertrand, Grand Marshal of the Palace, Porto Ferrajo, 9th August 1814.

[2] See Vol. XXVII.

and if you would be so kind as to give me your assurance of it I should feel greatly comforted."[1]

But it was not from this petty princeling any more than from Marie Louise that comfort was to come to him. No doubt he realised this at last, and whether from self-interest, kind-heartedness or genuine affection—with a woman all things are possible—it was one of his former mistresses, Madame Walewska, who brought him the comfort for which he yearned. Did he ask her to come? We doubt it. It was of Marie Louise alone that he thought, to her alone that he wrote. He had, as has been seen, fixed the end of August for her arrival and it was about that date that Madame Walewska arrived at Elba. Clearly she must have sent word to him of her coming, but he himself had not asked her to visit him. It was his wife he was longing for; it was his mistress who came.

"On the 1st September," we are told by one who witnessed her arrival at Porto Ferrajo, "Napoleon spent the whole day on the heights of Pomonte. Armed with a telescope he endeavoured to make out all the ships that hove in sight. When night came on he returned to the Hermitage, instructed his orderly-officer to ride at once to the stables at Porto Ferrajo to give orders for a carriage to be got ready and for three horses to be saddled, and then to proceed to the road which leads to the Place Saint-Jean, where he was to await further orders from Marshal Bertrand.

"It was a beautiful moonlight night and at about ten o'clock the officer, who had taken up his position at the place indicated, perceived a rowing-boat

[1] *Correspondance de Napoléon 1er.* Vol. XXVII, p. 432, pièce 21,651. To Ferdinand Joseph, Grand Duke of Tuscany, Porto Ferrajo, 10th October.

approaching the pier. Its occupants were three ladies and a child, who came ashore. The Marshal hastening forward greeted them with profound respect and conducted them to the carriage. Two of the ladies and the child got in, and the third as well as the Marshal, the orderly and a few others mounted horses and the whole party set out along the Mariana road. On reaching the cross-road leading to Prochia the cortège was met by Napoleon riding a white charger and accompanied by a troop of lancers and mamelukes. The carriage halted and His Majesty got down from his horse. The right-hand door of the carriage was opened and he entered alone amid the deepest silence. The procession then resumed its way and proceeded as far as the sea-shore at Prochia. There, owing to the roughness of the road, the carriage was unable to go any farther. The Emperor, the two ladies and the child therefore alighted and mounted the horses which the orderly had brought. The child was handed over to one of the ladies and the Emperor commanded the officer to get down and lead her horse by the bridle. On arriving at Mariana they turned away to the left and continued to ascend as rapidly as the darkness and the difficulties of the ground permitted. When about a third of a mile from the Hermitage the Emperor put spurs to his horse and hastened on so as to reach a tent he had had erected under a chest-nut tree a little before the rest of the party. There, just outside the tent, he awaited the unknown lady whose horse was being led by the officer. She alighted and entered the tent with the Emperor and the child. Marshal Bertrand busied himself with supplying the other ladies and the domestics with refreshment. Some he quartered at the Hermitage and the rest in tents which had been erected close by. This done he gave orders for the guard of mamelukes patrolling the outlets of the two roads leading to the hill to be renewed.

"The unknown remained there two days and two nights without making an appearance and the

Emperor only came out twice to give some orders. The child was taken for walks by one of the men composing his suite. He appeared to be about four or five years old and was dressed in the Polish fashion. During the time these persons were on the island Madame Mère, who was staying at a village about a mile away, was not allowed access to the hill."[1]

The "unknown," whom the inhabitants of the island took to be Marie Louise bringing her son to Napoleon—and the idea was perfectly natural—was none other than the Countess Walewska. Once before, in the melancholy days of his fall, she had gone to Fontainebleau to offer her consolation to her former lover,[2] but Napoleon, loyal to the troth he had plighted to Marie Louise, would not receive her. But on Elba, when his wife, who had not sent him the slightest word, seemed to have forgotten him, Napoleon relaxed his rigour and received Madame Walewska most affectionately. Moreover, did she not bring to him the offshoot of his loins, the child conceived after the battle of Wagram.

The young woman left Elba on the 3rd September and went to Naples entrusted by Napoleon with a confidential message for Murat. After her departure life on the island resumed its accustomed tranquillity. The Emperor still continued to send messages to Marie Louise, and did not abandon the hope of one day seeing her come to share his exile. On the 28th December he wrote to General Bertrand, saying:

"Find out what Lafargue's house would cost and how much would have to be spent to put it in repair.

[1] Th. Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 201.
[2] Générale Durand, *Mémoires*, p. 310.

If the Empress and the King of Rome came here, that would be the only house fit for the Princess to live in."[1]

What important matters then prevented Marie Louise from writing to her husband or from going to him as, leaving the dictates of love and affection out of the question, the most elementary sense of duty should have compelled her to do? Why, she was taking the waters at Aix-les-Bains in company with Neipperg, her chamberlain and paramour, and if she occasionally remembered her husband, it was but to refer to him as *Monsieur de l'île d'Elbe!*

History has pronounced its verdict on the character of Marie Louise. If treason is disloyalty, it is in certain circumstances cowardice also. Desertion joining hands with treason is the most despicable thing that the world can show, and Marie Louise has covered herself with this twofold ignominy. The type of a bad wife, an everlasting stigma will attach to her name. Her dulness of understanding and her foreign origin are her sole excuse.

The Emperor was very pained at receiving no reply from the Empress. In vain did his love for her prompt him to ascribe her prolonged silence to the control exercised by the police authorities, for he knew well enough that a woman with a heart would have conquered all obstacles and set all orders at defiance to win her way to her husband in his hour of misfortune. The example of Madame de Lafayette,

[1] *Correspondance de Napoléon 1er*, p. 439, pièce 21,661. To General Count Bertrand, Grand Marshal of the Palace, Porto Ferrajo, 28th December 1814.

who had braved all and overcome all to gain the favour of sharing her husband's captivity, was sufficiently recent for him to remember it. So he endeavoured to bear her neglect with patience. Without entering into the relations which Napoleon is alleged to have had on Elba with his sister Pauline, a charge to which we have already alluded and which we have refuted in another volume,[1] it has been stated that certain ladies of romantic tendencies essayed to obtain a hold over his heart, among others the Countess of Jersey, "who is referred to by Colonel Campbell in an unpublished letter, dated 26th December, to Mariotti, French Consul at Leghorn, in which he states that she has not yet succeeded in getting the handkerchief thrown at her."[2] Another, who was far from being a Countess, according to M. Marcellin Pellet, or rather according to a secret agent of Mariotti whose report he was quoting, would appear to have been more fortunate. Madame Bigeschi, such was the lady's name, was the wife of a member of the Junta, and it is said that she helped the Emperor agreeably to beguile the tedium of his exile. But it is a question whether much importance should be attached to these police reports.

At length Napoleon effected his escape from Elba with the secret complicity of England. More than one reason prompted him to flee from the rock on which the Allied Powers had enchained him, but the love he bore his wife and child and his longing to win back their affections were certainly not strangers to his desire to reascend the throne of France. Hardly had

[1] See the author's work, *Les sœurs de Napoléon*, p. 312 *et seq.*

[2] Marcellin Pellet, *Napoléon à l'île d'Elbe*, p. 52.

he arrived in Paris when he wrote as follows to his father-in-law: "I am too well acquainted with Your Majesty's principles, I know too well the value you set on your family affections, to lack the happy assurance that in spite of what your political advisers may direct, you will do your utmost to hasten the reunion of a wife with her husband and of a child with his father."[1]

It is impossible to state whether Napoleon really believed, as he said he did, in his father-in-law's good-will, but in the blindness of his love for his wife he attributed to her good qualities which she was far from possessing, and he never dreamt that now he was mounted on his throne once more she would hesitate to hasten to his side. Her delay in doing so he put down to a supposed tyrannical interference. Receiving no reply to his letters, he sent M. de Montrond to Vienna (the same M. de Montrond whom he had banished in 1811 for having made himself too notorious in the quality of Princess Pauline's lover[2]) in order that he might endeavour to secure the Empress's return. But it was so much trouble wasted. From the lofty height of a throne she had descended to the mire, and she continued to wallow in it under her father's indulgent eye without any wish to free herself. Napoleon had seen her for the last time in his life at Dresden in 1813, whither he had been so thoughtful as to summon her so that she might see her father. To minister to her amusement while she was there, he sent for the chief actors of the Comédie

[1] *Correspondance de Napoléon 1er.* Vol. XXVIII, pièce 21,753. To Francis I, Emperor of Austria at Vienna: Paris, 1st April, 1815.

[2] See *Les sœurs de Napoléon*, p. 294 *et seq.*

ançaise, and she was thus enabled nightly to enjoy pleasures of the theatre.

Once more disaster befalls him. Waterloo engulfs in ruin. Queen Hortense brings consolation to the nquished one and this is the one fair page in the tory of Josephine's daughter. He departs as he inks for England, only to be set ashore on St. Helena. He believed in the magnanimity of the English, he rusted the English Government, but instead of the elter which in all good faith he had asked of them he was treated as a prisoner of war, except that instead of being incarcerated in a floating prison he was sent away to an island somewhere in mid-ocean, whose climate, fatal to Europeans, was bound to make short work of a man who was still too great to be openly put to death.

The days passed heavily at St. Helena. He certainly d work there to kill time, but a man cannot be always work; when the spring is kept too long on the stretch it breaks or at all events grows weak. The toiler must have something to distract him. There was no theatre at St. Helena, he took little pleasure in horticulture, and having no one to fall back on but the de ntholons, Gourgaud, the Bertrands, the Las Cases, her and son, the hours, days and years seemed erminable, so that the vexatious and useless restraints posed on him by Sir Hudson Lowe almost served purpose of distractions in that accursed spot, veritable antechamber of Death. However, accord- to his gaoler's testimony, Love came more than e to visit the prisoner in his inferno whence all e was banished, and why should we not believe Sir

Hudson Lowe? His Memoirs bear the hall-mark of sincerity and he is no more indulgent to himself than he had been to his mighty prisoner. And then does not Love penetrate everywhere? Did it not find its way into the prisons during the Reign of Terror, did it not live beneath the very shadow of the guillotine? Yes, the Emperor appears to have had his love affairs on St. Helena, or at least not to have rejected the distractions offered him by certain women with whom he had dallied in his antechambers in the days when his power was at its height.

Sir Hudson Lowe has placed it on record that, according to the gossip of the Island, more ladies than one helped to lighten the gloom of the Emperor's captivity. He has stated that some of them made no secret of the matter, and that, if he had desired to cause a scandal, which, he added, would have been eminently gratifying to the ladies concerned, he could have divulged their names, but that he refrained, seeing that no useful purpose could have been served by the disclosure.[1]

It is quite possible that Napoleon did not deny himself the pleasures which the ladies of the Tuileries used formerly to offer him with such great eagerness, but who could the ladies have been? Except Madame de Montholon and Madame Bertrand no woman had access to the Great Exile. It was not possible to reach Longwood without Lowe's written permission and unless attended by a considerable escort. A double cordon of sentries ensured that this regulation was duly observed. This was why Napoleon quickly made up his mind not

[1] *Memoirs of Sir Hudson Lowe*, p. 268.

to receive anyone at all. Moreover, he could not go out without being followed and kept in sight, and was not allowed to enter a house save in the company of a British officer. Lowe in his Memoirs seems only to have had the two French ladies in mind, and possibly Napoleon showed some special attentions to Madame Bertrand. When the matter, magnified and distorted by the idle and the malevolent, reached the governor's ears, it no doubt soon became something more than mere friendliness in English eyes. Madame Bertrand, as is well known, was very pretty. "She was young, witty, wayward, lively and imperious, but kind-hearted and gay for all her childish antics."[1] She was a Creole, her family name being de Dillon, and she united in her person all the manifold charms of the French Creoles, but General Paulin, who was General Bertrand's aide-de-camp, assures us that she possessed in addition an affection for her husband and a sense of duty which, though they did not debar her from frivolous amusements, put any possibility of unfaithfulness out of the question.

It had been remarked that the Emperor showed more attention to Madame Bertrand than to Madame de Montholon, that he had given her a phaeton and many other beautiful presents, and that one day when her cook was so drunk that he could not get her dinner ready Napoleon had sent her some dishes from his own table. Then one fine day the friendship came to an end and Napoleon caused it to be intimated to Madame Bertrand that he did not wish to see her again. This order was never revoked, despite the entreaties of the

[1] Général Baron Paulin, *Souvenirs*, p. 226.

poor woman and her husband. Madame de Montholon returned to Europe without anyone knowing why. But it all made the gossips busy, and Las Cases in his *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* freely states that internal discord was rife in the little colony. Napoleon's caprices and preferences and the various jealousies to which they gave rise were no doubt the origin of these squabbles.

But such distractions, if it is true that the Emperor indulged in them, did not cause him ever to forget his wife. His love for her suffered no change, no abatement. "Napoleon was for ever talking of his son and of Marie-Louise" is the testimony of a witness who can scarcely be said to err on the side of partiality for him. "He adored them," continues the same writer, "with all the force of a devotion that is increased and stimulated by absence." Absence, we are told, weakens and effaces love, but that, Napoleon used to say, was a grievous error. If we love truly our passion only becomes the more intense when we are sundered from the beloved one. Our every thought flies to her; we people with her image the solitude around us; we behold her everywhere; everywhere we invoke her name and presence; our imagination is fired by the thoughts of her, and our memory feeds eternally upon her image; we compare her with whatsoever is before and around us, and in this sweet and ceaseless use of all the forces of our soul it can at least be said that satiety, monotony, and *ennui* never come to lay their icy touch upon our hearts. "As for myself," he would say with a sigh, "I love my good Louise after five years of separation more deeply perhaps than I should

have loved her had we remained together at the Tuileries."[1]

Nevertheless he could not have been in ignorance of his wife's infamy. Sir Hudson Lowe, without any appearance of design, had contrived to put before him the books and newspapers which made mention of it. But perhaps Napoleon, who had read Lewis Goldsmith's miserable pamphlet, could not bring himself to believe in such an atrocious betrayal. Otherwise would it have been possible for him so to deceive himself as to keep his "good" Louise's portrait hung up over the mantelpiece in his bedroom? Or again, when he heard, in 1817, that she had been thrown from her horse into the River Po and had only been rescued with difficulty, would he have been so deeply affected at the news as to require it to be read over to him three times? Or would he have penned the letter which he wrote on the 25th July 1818, and handed to Doctor O'Meara on the latter's departure from St. Helena, in which he said: "I beg my friends and relatives to believe all that Doctor O'Meara may tell them regarding my position and the feelings which I entertain. If he sees my good Louise I pray her to let him kiss her hand."

Finally, as if it had been decreed that the absurd should find a place even in situations of the most woeful sadness, he speaks as follows in his will: "I have ever had cause to commend my beloved wife Marie Louise, and I retain the tenderest feelings for her to the last."

And had he not directed that his body was to be

[1] *Memoirs of Sir Hudson Lowe.*

opened and that his heart should be preserved in spirits-of-wine and sent to Marie Louise?

If he had been aware of his wife's conduct he would not have recorded this desire, for he would have asked himself what Marie Louise and her lover Neipperg could do with such a relic.

And what, indeed, could they have done with it?

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